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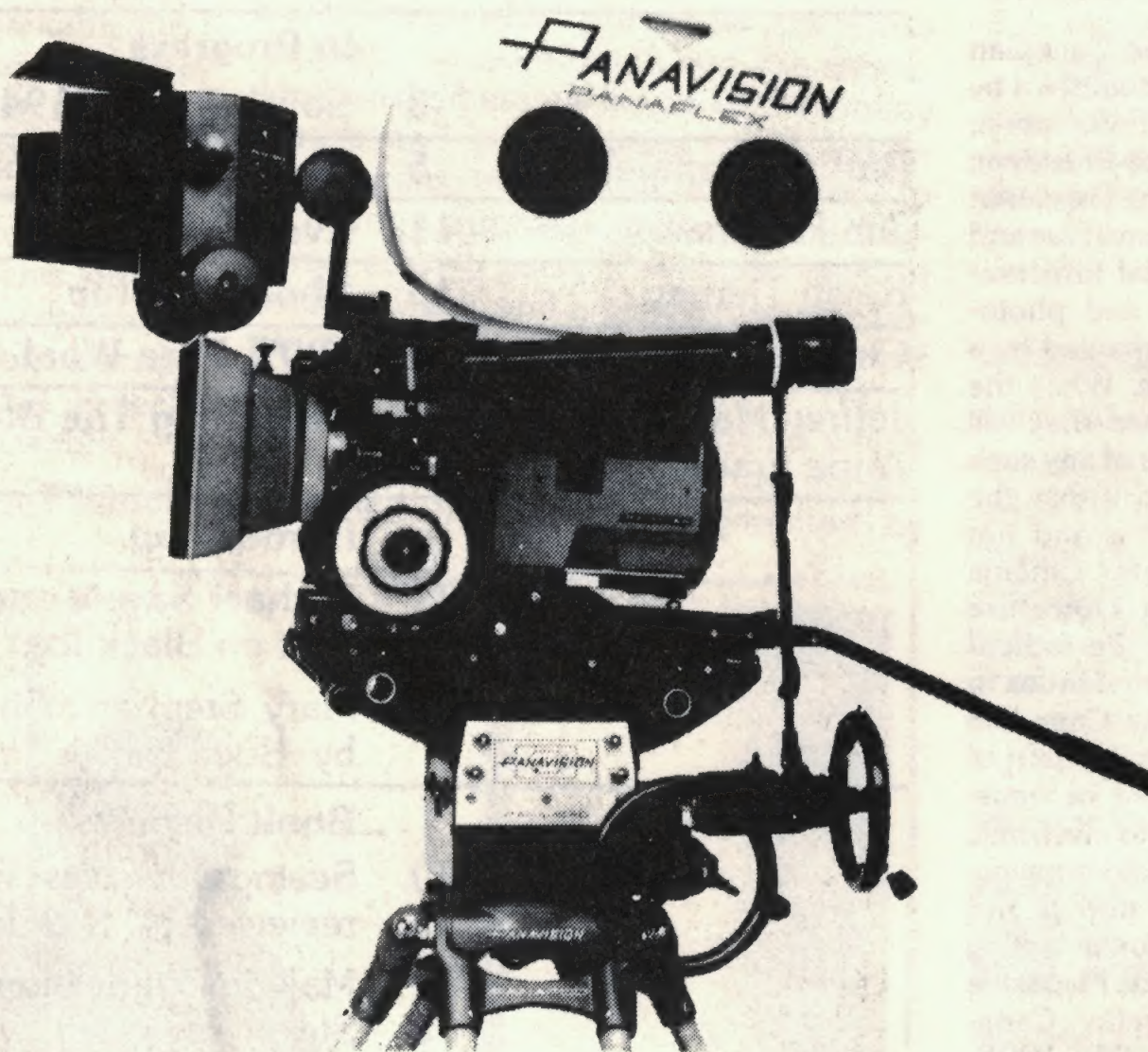
Cover : Fourteen-year-old Brett Marx is indeed a 'lucky star'. Out of hundreds of children who auditioned for the leading role in Max Fischer's new feature, **The Lucky Star**, Brett was chosen to play David, a young Jewish boy who pits himself against the Nazi 'Goliath' in this cowboy fantasy/W.W. 11 drama set in Holland. (Photo : Takashi Seida)

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IN PROGRESS...

South Pacific, 1942

p.c. Surfacing Film Productions Ltd. (1979) p. Michael Donovan p. asst. Michael Perry p. sec. Jayne Mackenzie d./sc. Paul Donovan a.d. Marc Copeland d.o.p. Juan Valladares cam. op. Les Krizsan ed. Hussein Mohamad, Stefan Ronavich (asst.) key grip Doug Meggison cont. Nancy Muise unit man. Lisa MacRae sd. Pierre Dostie mus. Marcel Doucet boom Chuck Lapp gaf. Michael Ruggles p. design. John Walsh cost. design Robin Benjamin make-up Kathy O'Connell, Jim Michieli, Carolyn van Gorp carpenters Tom Cove, Fritz Boonzaier cook Angela Chartie stills Bill Niven l.p. Alan MacGillivray, Richard Rebiere, Andrea Zaduban, Lynette Louise, Terry Depres, Jeff Pustil, Gary Vermeir, Dug Rotsteen, Lorne Ryan, Bill Papps, Maher Boutros.

So there are two wild and crazy oil rig divers on top of the submarine — one standing on the other's shoulders trying to hook a pulley into the roof of the old brewery warehouse. Muffled shots are heard from another corner, where one of the crew is trying to bring down a Halifax wharf rat with a 38-style pellet gun. The twenty-hour day wears on as last-minute set wrinkles are worked out for the HMCS **STRIDENT**, a fictitious World War 11 Canadian submarine, whose exploits are the subject of the film **South Pacific, 1942**.

The feature is being produced by Surfacing Film Productions of Halifax and was shot in that city this past winter on a six-week schedule and a \$500,000 budget. Frustrated by their encounters with the CFDC, the two partners — Paul Donovan and brother Michael — waded into the sea of private investment and raised the money entirely in Nova Scotia. Both are from Halifax originally, and shooting a 35mm feature about a submarine in the South Pacific, right in the middle of a Halifax winter, didn't seem as implausible to them as it might have to others; so they went ahead with it.

The film was written and directed by Paul Donovan. It is a black wartime comedy about a Canadian-crewed sub that picks up the survivors of a mercy liner, which they unknowingly sunk earlier. Under the impression that the Japa-



photo : Bill Niven

It's the 'wet look' for Montreal actor Richard Rebière, and shipmate Lorne Ryan of Toronto, in this action-packed scene from **South Pacific 1942**. Camera operator Les Krizsan moves in to get a piece of the action.

nese had sunk the liner, the sub, under the command of a glory-hungry captain, sets out to sink the largest Japanese aircraft carrier in the South Pacific.

Casting for the film was done in Halifax and Toronto, with the final cast made up of roughly fifty percent Nova Scotians, and fifty percent other Canadians. The

crew had an international flavor; a cinematographer from Venezuela, an assistant director from California, an assistant cameraman from England, and an editor from Lebanon.

The inherent hardships of the low-budget feature notwithstanding, the production more than proved a few of Murphy's Laws. The first week, one of the leading players had to be replaced after a disagreement; the second, a stray welder's spark started a fire on the set. From there on it was easy street — the makeup artist had to go into hospital; 6,000 feet of film

were forgotten in an Air Canada warehouse, for three weeks, en route to the lab; the Steadicam, rented at \$500 per day, didn't work (never mind it disappeared — all four cases — from an Air Canada warehouse on its way back to the rental company); and the topper of it all... another submarine movie production with a budget of \$18 million plus, expressed interest in buying the set, then decided against it. Two days after the set had been scrapped, they called up and said they wanted to buy it after all! Michael Donovan, generally the calmest of souls, almost told them to shove it in their aft torpedo

tubes: instead, he sold them the remains and shipped it off to Toronto.

Ah, but things weren't always tough. After six weeks of shooting in a cold, wet warehouse, the cast and crew flew to balmy Belize in Central America (formerly British Honduras), for some exteriors. It was R & R after six-day weeks and ten to twenty-hour days on as claustrophobic a set as one could imagine.

No efforts were spared in the construction of the set — to the specifications of an "S" class World War 11 British submarine. This meant an added element of realism, but very limited shooting space. Proper lighting requires the use of many small lights and mirrors to increase the light spread. The new Lowell "Omni" lights were brought in because of their light weight and high output, but it was found that they burned so 'hot' that their ceramic bases and bulbs went like "hot-cakes." The reliable old 'Inkie' stood up much better, even when sprayed with water.

Water — yes, there was a lot of that! the havoc wreaked by depth charges made walking through the set quite hazardous during filming. One was likely to get hit by falling ventilation ducts, or sprayed by red-hot metal from an arc welder, run by a fearless crew member perched atop the set, amidst the water gushing from high-pressure hoses...

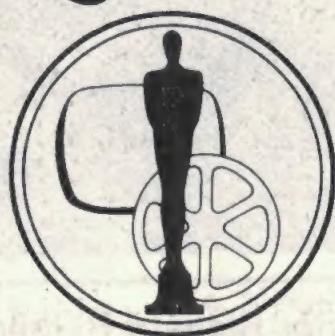
Despite the shooting conditions, the morale of the cast and crew was remarkably high. The hierarchical pecking-order present in many film productions was non-existent. Prior to filming, the director and the director of photography could often be found building parts of the set with hammer or cutting torch in hand. The actors helped with the props and provided musical entertainment; the unit manager proved to be the most prolific dish-washer on the set; and no one really complained very much about the food being ostensibly vegetarian. The aim was to finish the film on schedule, to prove to the investors that it could be done, and to qualify it as a Certified Canadian Production for 1979. The final night of shooting — December 31, 1979 — was a long one; but the champagne was from France. Post-production will be finished for Cannes, and a late-summer release is expected.

Chuck Lapp

Chuck Lapp, coordinator of the Atlantic Film Co-op in its early days, is a Halifax-based filmmaker and free-lance writer.

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renaissance woman

by barbara samuels



In search of outlets for her unbridled creativity, Micheline Lanctôt has proven herself a talented actress, writer, and now, director. In the process, she has developed a rare insight into the complexities of filmmaking.

Phase II. Just as they were polishing the obituary for the Quebec film industry, it was suddenly back in business. Despite the cynicism voiced in some quarters, and with all the energy familiar the last time round, the movies are being made again. Certainly a good many names and faces are brand new, but the veterans are still to be found — though not necessarily in familiar guise. A case in point: one of the top 'first phase' actresses has become a 'second phase' director, and the result of that metamorphosis is the engaging **L'homme à tout faire**.

Micheline Lanctôt has garnered international recognition for her performances in Quebec films; most notably as the star of Gilles Carle's **La vraie nature de Bernadette**, and in her role opposite Richard Dreyfuss in **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz**. Although she played in the recent **Mourir à tue-tête**, it is her work as writer/director that is generating the new excitement. **L'homme à tout faire** will bow internationally at the Director's Fortnight in Cannes this year; a rather heady tribute to a first-time director under any circumstances. But Lanctôt is far from blinded by the stardust. An experienced professional on both sides of the camera, she learned a good deal about that sudden "flush of success" the first time round, and remains guarded in her response to all the new acclaim. Independent, witty, and refreshingly frank, Lanctôt surveys the current scene from a distinctly unique viewpoint. Her observations become particularly relevant as the second era of Quebec film moves into gear.

Cinema Canada: Most people knew you primarily as an actress previous to **L'homme à tout faire**. How did your involvement with film begin?

Micheline Lanctôt: I was a film animator for about four years, so I was familiar with film from a point of view other than

acting. Acting gave me set experience. But I never had any formal training in either field.

Cinema Canada: Do you regret that?
Micheline Lanctôt: I don't know. Sometimes I envy people who've gone through exhaustive training. And yet I can't do it. I went to Beaux Arts for two months,

I find something stale about training...

because I was going to be an artist, and I couldn't stand it: much too academic. The schools compress you into a certain way of doing things, which I think doesn't apply to art. My music training was fairly exhaustive, but I still deplore the fact that it was rigidly academic. That kind of training doesn't let you expand: you've got to be a major talent to expand beyond the forms. And I never studied acting either, because when I saw what the schools were producing — people who walked and talked and acted alike — I thought, this isn't the way you should form an actor. You should let him express his own identity. When I was in Beaux Arts, they tried to teach me how to compose a drawing. You don't teach that: balancing a painting is an instinctive thing. I would have liked to study the technical aspects of film, but I've always felt that practical experience in the field is more enriching. I find something stale about training — but that's a purely personal opinion.

Cinema Canada: Where did you begin work in animation?

Micheline Lanctôt: I started in the NFB. I presented a project, and it was accepted — the arrogance of youth. I stayed there for a year-and-a-half, did all the 'kitchen' aspects. I worked on all the other projects,

assembly line work, and after a year-and-a-half I got fed up, because I wasn't getting ahead with my project. So we parted company — rather bitterly. I ended up at Potterton Productions, where I started at the bottom again and worked all the way up. I became an assistant animator after a year, and assisted for a feature. I looked at the work, and I figured 'That isn't so hard,' so I went to the boss and said, "I think I should animate." At that time, there were very few female animators, I think maybe two in Canada, and four in the States. And they guy said, "OK. I'm going to give you a scene to animate. If it works, you're an animator. If it doesn't, you're fired." And I swallowed hard and worked like crazy for two months. Boy, did I learn fast! I became an animator, and subsequently animated the next feature, which was **The Selfish Giant**. It got nominated for an Oscar.

Cinema Canada: What made you leave animation?

Micheline Lanctôt: I was going to go on, but I'm temperamentally unsuited to the work. It's monastic: twelve hours a day on a light box. And then I met Gilles Carle. And again, I learned by the steeping process. I was catapulted into acting for cinema (**La vraie nature de Bernadette**) which of course I said I could do. I was panicky for the first few days, and then began to learn how it was done. I had acted before in theatre productions, and now I was learning film acting. It was fantastic!

Acting didn't qualify me to be a director.

Cinema Canada: From an acting point of view, were you at all intimidated by the technology on set?

Micheline Lanctôt: No, because I was familiar with film teamwork from animation, which is nothing but teamwork. Although you work independently, you're drawing for a camera, you've got to know the cinematic language. And when I shot animation, I was working with people, and it was the same as features, except for the set. So it was fascinating, because I didn't quite know what the functions were on set. But you learn very quickly. And I would use all the idle time — and there were hours of it — to observe what was going on. It became very useful when I became a director. I didn't learn about camera placement — that was the

Barbara Samuels is a free-lance writer working in Montreal.

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Infecting her neighbours with the joy of life, Lanctôt in her first leading role, in **La vraie nature de Bernadette**

director's prerogative. But I learned to function with the people. I love film technicians — they're a great breed. I used to hang around them a lot, and absorb a lot of information, which became very useful. You bluff your way through. I'd hear a cameraman talking about a 9.8 lens, and so at one point on set, I'd say, "Why don't we try a 9.8mm lens?" It can be awfully handy.

Cinema Canada : What about the transition from one side of the camera to the other?

Micheline Lanctôt : Acting didn't qualify me to be a director. They're two totally different professions that appeal to totally opposite ends of the personality. It took me about four days to get into the director's personality, to convince myself that I

was a director. I think the vision of a director is a very peculiar thing, and you have it or you don't. You can either carry it through and impress forty-two people that that's the way it should be, or you can't. And that's what I learned in four days.

...few directors actually know actors.

Cinema Canada : Did you find yourself more sympathetic to the performers than a director without an acting background would have been?

Micheline Lanctôt : Oh yes. I've always been a bit irritated by the fact that very few directors actually know actors. It

creates a lot of tension, because actors are usually the last people consulted on set. It's a very unsettling feeling. You're shoved in front of a light, and you've got to hit your mark, and you can't move a certain way, 'cause you'll be out of focus. Because most actors aren't familiar with film techniques, it's very disturbing for them. On stage you've got an area you can work in, and a public that responds to you; but on a film set, you're just a cog in the wheel. Because I was aware of that, I think my actors felt very secure. I wanted to give them latitude, and I think that, as a result, the performances are very rounded. It allows for very discreet performances, too, because insecure actors will often ham it up.

You have to keep a balance between the actors and the technicians, and we had it on my film. If an actor fluffs his lines, and the technicians are sitting around muttering under their breath, the actor becomes more insecure and blows the line again. So you have to side with your actors, and tell them never mind, we're going to do it till you get it right; and you have to tell you technicians, pleasantly, to shut up. Mutual respect comes out of that. If it doesn't, it's technicians against actors, and I've seen that happen. Too often, directors get overburdened by their technical problems, and they separate from the set, which is the worst thing that can happen.

Cinema Canada : Were the crew members you used the same people you had worked with on other pictures?

Micheline Lanctôt : Yes. I had worked with them on a picture where I had made a scene during shooting, and they all came onto the set the first day petrified. It was very funny, because they realized after two days that I was a different person. And I explained that, as an actor, you are at the mercy of everything. An actor's job is to be emotional, and you have to deal with it. You have to manage their outbursts so that they don't contaminate the set, but you have to let them be emotional. A performer's emotions are skin-deep: if they're deeper than that, the actor can't play.

Cinema Canada : Was *L'homme à tout faire* a pet project you'd wanted to launch for a long time?

Micheline Lanctôt : Well, I was determined to do it, but I never expected to do it. It was like a kind of dream, because when I wrote it, I wasn't going to direct it. Having lived with a director for six years, I knew it was an incredible amount of work, and I didn't feel strong enough to take it on. Plus the fact that I didn't know any-

thing. And it was René who convinced me that I should direct it — it was a very personal script, in many ways. I thought that if this man was confident that I could do it, then I should be confident.

Cinema Canada: *Is this the first time René Malo has produced?*

Micheline Lanctôt: Yes, it's his first independent production. He co-produced some of Jean-Claude Lord's films, but it was his first time as a full-time producer. And the result was excellent. I came in on budget and on time, which is practically unheard of for a first time. I was too aware of the cost of film to squander it. And I'm exceedingly pleased with the results, although some things are missing in the film. I learned to compensate for what I couldn't get sometimes. Jean-Claude was extraordinary as a production director. I had told René that I wanted a team of people who could come to decisions quickly, solve problems. And René, Jean-Claude and my assistant were exactly like that. We had extraordinary problems that got solved in ten minutes.

Cinema Canada: *How long was your shooting schedule?*

Micheline Lanctôt: Thirty days. And we had thirty-six locations. For the first ten days, we had two locations a day.

Cinema Canada: *Here comes the obligatory question. Considering yourself, Anne-Claire Poirier and Mireille Danse-reau, there seems to be an upsurge of women directing films in Quebec. Do you think it's pure happenstance, or is there a specific reason for this?*

Micheline Lanctôt: I must exclude myself from that, because I don't think I do 'women's' pictures. I think there was a certain trend that facilitated women's access to film, but I personally don't believe in 'women's' films. I think it's useful that someone makes them, but I can't make them myself. I don't think of myself as a 'woman director', I think of myself as a 'director', period.

Cinema Canada: *Do you find yourself regarded as a 'woman' director, despite yourself?*

Micheline Lanctôt: No. My attitude is simply this: who's to say that because I'm a woman, I can't do something? And I guess that attitude influences people.

Cinema Canada: *Your central character is a man who could never have been created by another male...*

Micheline Lanctôt: Right. And I think that's making a true 'woman's picture': an alternative point of view. On reading the script, some people thought I was criticizing male attitudes. And I wasn't; I was just proposing an alternative.

Cinema Canada: *That alternative point of view also extends to the Marcel Sabourin character as well, I think. Very few portraits of homosexuals on screen have emerged so cliché-free.*

Micheline Lanctôt: I think Marcel hit just the right note in his portrayal. And I liked the character of Georges Poitras. I would have liked to have put more of him in the film, finally; but it would have diverted from the film's story. The husband's character was the closest I came to decrying

male chauvinists, and I wanted even him to be sympathetic. It amazes me, because some people see him as the villain, and he's not. There's no villain in the film.

Cinema Canada: *What about the female portraits?*

Micheline Lanctôt: A lot of feminists hated the females in the film. I used to say that the women in the film were the faces of Eve, and I believe it. The little waitress, the CEGEPienne... and Thérèse; they didn't like her portrait, because they thought it was a stereotype of a suburban wife. Well, I was a suburban wife, for Christ's sake, and I know how it feels.

Quebec films can't be released in the rest of Canada.

Cinema Canada: *I wonder how much these characters' behaviour is a result of the kind of protagonist you have. Women often speak of looking for a man who won't pull 'sexual rank' on them, or abuse them; and yet, when faced with just such a person, they're at a loss as to what to do.*

Micheline Lanctôt: Exactly. And that's why he fails everywhere. Because effectively, and this comes from my own knowledge of women, if you find someone who adores you, you spit on him, because he's not a 'man'. You're as much a victim of stereotypes, of set patterns. And I think men and women won't be able to understand one another until they break the patterns.

Cinema Canada: *I'd like to return to your role as writer/director. Do you intend to continue as such in the immediate future?*

Micheline Lanctôt: I would like to. I'm directing my own stuff, because people wouldn't come to me to direct *their* material. It's very hard to do, because right now I'm faced with having to write my own script, and that means about two years before I go back to a set. That's a very bad hiatus. I have a friend who says that the best time you can make a film is when you've just finished one; when you understand all your mistakes and you can correct them. I mean, I have three scripts already written, but they can't be financed: they're too expensive.

Cinema Canada: *"Too expensive" in terms of a Quebec film?*

Micheline Lanctôt: Yes. But that's a problem everywhere. Most people think that Quebec cinema is victimized. Well,

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...calling the tricks, as the madam of a rural Quebec brothel in **Les corps célestes**

no more than Swiss film, or American film. Film is becoming more and more costly. Kodak has raised its prices, and now you can't make a low-budget film for less than \$800,000. Go find \$800,000. It's hard, because we don't have a market.

Cinema Canada: This famous division between the 'Quebec' film industry and the 'Canadian' industry... people say it's made on the basis of market. There's certainly a different flavour to the pictures being produced here; and everyone says, "Marvelous movies." Then that little addendum: "Who's going to go see them?" Do you think that's a question for Quebec, or should it be directed to the English-language pictures?

Micheline Lanctôt: I think it should be directed to the English-language pictures. Michel Bouchard, who's president of the

The only money the CFDC is going to see back will be from the Quebec pictures.

Directors' Association in Quebec says that the Canadian Film Development Corporation is going to be confronted with a very serious problem, because the only films that are going to be making money are the Quebec films. And the CFDC oriented its policies toward the super and co-productions, thinking that

these would feed the market. Look, Quebec pictures can't be released in the rest of Canada. For a variety of reasons, people just won't go see them. But I see no reason why Quebec films shouldn't be distributed in New York, France, Italy — the same route that any picture goes.

Cinema Canada: But what about the prevailing attitude that you don't aim for the art house circuit — which is where the Quebec pictures would probably end up — you aim instead for distribution under the majors' umbrella; you try for TV sales, home box office; and by that route, you'll see a return on your investment?

Micheline Lanctôt: I know people think that way, but I think they'll be proven wrong. I think the only money the CFDC is going to see back will be from the Quebec pictures. I'm judging from the success of the Quebec pictures that came out recently. I haven't seen the figures from any of the super-productions, but I think most of them haven't made their money.

Cinema Canada: Do you think there really is an English-language 'Canadian' film?

Micheline Lanctôt: Yes. **Goin' Down the Road.** I remember when we saw that film, we came out singing and dancing in the street. I couldn't believe it. I was staggered. Despite its problems, it was precisely what I think of as a 'Canadian' film. I mean, Gordon Pinsent has three wonderful scripts, all set in Newfoundland. And he can't get them off the ground. And *that* is English Canada to me. There's a book called *Halfbreed* which a friend of mine in Alberta is trying to turn into a picture. It's a magical subject: totally Canadian, and yet it's universal. It's an autobiography. And he can't get the project off the ground.



Closing a deal with a local farmer for her wheeling and dealing beau, Duddy Kravitz, Yvette soon discovers that her love for him isn't enough



Sitting pretty, until the love triangle threatens to become a tug-of-war, Lanctôt as Lucky in **Blood and Guts**. Below: In Jean-Guy Noël's **Ti-Cul Tougas**.

Cinema Canada : *I think people are a bit confused by the lack of an overall whole ; Canada's regionalism seems to present identity problems.*

Micheline Lanctôt : But the regionalism is what makes it so fascinating. When I was asked to play in **Duddy Kravitz**, I didn't even know the book. I had read *St-Urbain's Horseman*, and I knew Mordecai. But even if it was going to be a crossover, I was going to do it. I was so excited that they were making the film out of a book that was *Canadian*. And then the film was attacked for "not being Canadian." That film is profoundly Canadian. It's *us*. It's not an American film. People all over the world recognize themselves as Duddy Kravitz, and yet he was a Montrealer. You can always spot Canadians abroad. It happened to me when I was in L.A. for five years. They're totally different from Americans. I don't know what makes them Canadians ; you can't analyze it. But that's what they are. Now that I've been abroad, I don't question my identity any more. I am a Quebecer. I don't have to make *Quebec* films to be a Quebecer. And English Canada has to realize that, too ; whatever they make, it's Canadian. They don't have to reach for this mysterious 'universality' to make the product marketable.

Cinema Canada : *The word 'industry' connotes something big ; and in order to turn Canadian film into something big, I guess big box office returns are your best yardstick.*

Micheline Lanctôt : It's an impossible problem. People seem to think that an industry can be built in a matter of days. It took fifty years for Hollywood to get where it is ; and it's known some very low

The regionalism is what makes it so fascinating.

periods. I don't think the answer lies in borrowing a structure from somewhere else. If you want to build a Canadian film industry, you have to build it for Canadian circumstances. If you want to make American pictures, go to America. I mean, even the unions borrow their rate structure from the American system. It can kill the industry here. You can't inflict market conditions on cinema which it can't support. No matter what policy the CFDC follows, it can't change the fact that Canada has twenty-three million people ; and most of them live in rural areas, and don't go to movies. So I think that the art market is still the best solution for any Canadian film — be it English or French.

There are 1500 art cinemas in the United States ; if your film runs one day, it'll pay. I also think that Canadian films should be sold as foreign films : it's about time we distinguished ourselves from the Americans, and that means re-evaluating the distribution system. France has the same problems : I think most of their cinemas are owned by American chains. The money doesn't stay in France — it goes to the U.S. We need a government-run cinema chain.

Cinema Canada : *You dealt with both the CFDC and L'institut québécois du cinéma to make your film. How do you view the two organizations ?*

Micheline Lanctôt : Well, I think subsidies are bad, but I can't make films without them. I think L'Institut has less responsibility, because it deals only with Quebec film ; so they can afford to be more artistically ambitious. Any government organization is going to draw parasites, liberty-takers ; but despite the nonsense, some good pictures get made. I think that, because it's slightly freer of structures, L'Institut can deal on a more emotional level than the CFDC can. I know cinema is an industry. I'd rather it be an art. Honesty is not well-tolerated when you're dealing with money : and that's very wearying.

Cinema Canada : *You've mentioned that your last experience at Cannes, as a visiting actress, was a very distasteful one. How do you feel about returning ?*

Micheline Lanctôt : The terms are very different this time. I'm going as a person with a product to sell — which is the only way to go. □



ever ready!

by jim henshaw

Versatility is the name of the film game ; and Danny Goldberg knows how to play. With more than his fair share of energy, this pragmatic optimist grabs hold of opportunities, learns from his mistakes, and risks failure in order to succeed.



Producer Danny Goldberg — sharpening his focus through experience

photo : Mark Hanauer

"Mainly, I just work hard and hope I'm talented enough to make something happen." That kind of self-deprecating yet positive remark is typical of Danny Goldberg, writer-producer of Canada's most successful film, **Meatballs**. Talking with Danny is like getting shot up with a few hundred grains of pure positive energy. His speech is riddled with terms that seem to spring from a textbook on Psycho-Cybernetics. He makes you aware that, with enough hard work, it's amazing how lucky you can get.

The financial success of **Meatballs** (top Canadian-grosser ever, and No. 16 and No. 110 respectively, on *Variety's* 1979 and All-Time Profit lists), seems to have done little to alter Goldberg's daily schedule.

He, and his writing partner of ten years, Len Blum, (co-winner with Goldberg and Janis Allen of the 1980 Genie for original screenplay for **Meatballs**) start work at 8:30 a.m., six days a week, and — save a lunchbreak — force themselves to keep filling empty pages until six in the evening. Though backbreaking, the schedule is the only way he feels a writer can stay focused on his material. Admittedly, the pressure, on occasion, drives the two into an adjoining room to pick up drums and guitars and wail their brains clear for a few minutes. But after a week spent hammering out a structure ("On our latest, it was about

two weeks, with an average of 1.3 new structures every day."), the synopsis is nailed to the wall, literally, and the two split up scenes and begin to write separately. "Len sits here, I sit there. If we do talk, it's along the lines of...Is this funny? Is that funny?" The finished pages are put in a pile and corrected together. What works and what doesn't is discussed, and interminable rewrites begin — one often rewriting for the other.

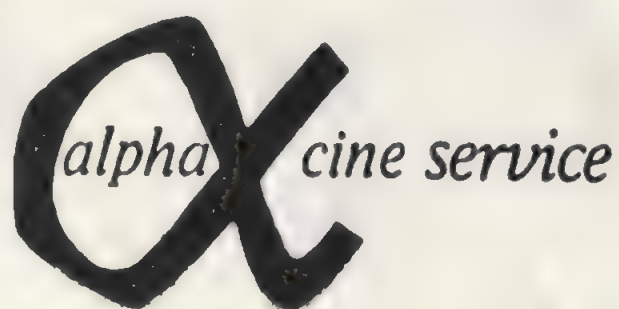
First drafts are long. Too long. Jokes that keep topping each other, scenes and characters that go off on tangents... "Thirty to forty percent of writing is confidence: getting an idea and just doing it. Not worrying that it might be terrible." But the ultimate goal of the rewriting is a script that amounts to 115 pages: a size Goldberg feels is the right length for feature film comedy. "Every scene has to both move the script forward and be funny; fifteen lines honed to six or four that get the same point across. For us six lines is a lot of dialogue."

Danny's experience with **Meatballs** and his years of working with John Dunning and André Link of Cinepix have taught him that, as much of the creative work is done *after* the last frame has been shot, as before. "The attitude at Cinepix was, 'Let's screen it and let's change it.' Films were cut and mixed thousands of times to make them better." In its completed form, **Meatballs** ran three-and-a-half hours. "With fifteen major characters, the ad-libbing became kind of algebraic." During editing, entire new scenes were shot between Tripper (Bill Murray) and Rudy (Chris Makepeace) to strengthen what was to become the prime relationship in the film. Long editing sessions and constant screenings restructured the movie several times. Many good scenes were lost, but as Goldberg puts it, "I feel so great when I take something out and the film works better. I'm tied to it for maybe five seconds."

This hard-nosed approach to his own written work seems to be reflected in his approach to producing a film. "When I'm writing I don't think about producing. I don't do scenes because they'll be easier to get together, or anything like that; although I do try and think about who I'm writing for." He feels that casting properly is as important as the quality of the script, but that that has to apply to acquiring the other members of his creative team in addition to actors. "You choose people not because of names or track records, but because of creative energies. And those creative energies should be able to withstand a lot of clawing and fighting to make the best film possible. Among creative people there is no fear. The same way you have to let the actors play it, you must realize that the art director knows more about art than you do." Enamored and impressed as he is by Ivan Reitman's direction of **Meatballs**, he feels film is not a one-man medium: that it is up to the producer to stand up to his director on creative grounds and supply perspective on the level of... "I don't care how meaningful the scene is, it isn't working."

Because making a good film seems to be Goldberg's major ambition in life, the growth of the Canadian film industry excites him. He feels that here is the greatest opportunity to experiment. To risk failure. To try things you would never be able to attempt in Hollywood because

Jim Henshaw is an actor and writer who lives in Toronto.



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it could be your only shot. His only worry is that films here are often made for the wrong reasons.

"I get so many people who tell me, 'Well, the script's not so good, but have a look at it, and 'We're gonna get real big stars for it.' I figure why? Why bother? Make the script good! You only get a few opportunities to make a movie. Once a movie's bad, there's nothing you can do about it. It's there, it's bad. Nobody's going to see it. I want to make them good. I don't ever want to look at one and say, I wish I hadn't been tired that day. Because that scene just isn't good enough."

He finds the move to larger-budget films has given him the luxury of time to work on things, and make them better. And he doesn't see the current, big-budget trend, as a threat to the small filmmaker. "I sense the frustration, but I think it's just bellyaching! If you want it... you just do it!" In addition, he sees the future for all film people in Canada as a bright one. "I have a lot of faith in this country. Money might tighten and investors smarten up, but people have to be forced into a situation. If you can make hundreds of thousands of dollars simply by putting your name on a picture and saying you're a producer, I guess you'll do that. If suddenly somebody says, you'll have to make good movies or I'm not going to invest in them, then maybe movies will get better. I have a feeling the pressure will help."

With all of this, Goldberg's main concern is the ugly spectre of politics. "If a movie doesn't work, forget it! No matter how many Canadians you have in it, or how much integrity you have, if nobody wants to see it, it doesn't matter. On the other hand, if it's a hit, everybody loves you and you get to do it again."

No matter what you think of **Meatballs**, its success means Danny Goldberg will get to do it again. Of that success he shrugs and smiles... "Most of the stuff I know is because of the mistakes I've made. I've made enough mistakes that I'm a little smarter, that's all."

Smarter, harder-working, caring — and in love with making movies. Danny Goldberg will be around after other producers are just names on salads in the bistros where they cut their deals. Ultimately, that is going to be very good for all of us. □

Danny Goldberg Filmography

Meatballs (1978) : producer / writer

Blackout (1977) : sound supervisor

Rabid (1976) : associate producer / sound supervisor

Shivers (1974) : assistant director / sound supervisor

Deathweekend : sound supervisor

Tout feu tout femme : sound supervisor

Cannibal Girls (1972) : producer

Foxy Lady (1970) : associate producer



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and**

Editor, STEPHAN FANFARA

for your caring and splendid work on

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Toronto release date : May 2, 1980

Dick Benner, director

shooting star

by kevin tierney

Nursing his project from conception through to completion, director Max Fischer has finally made *The Lucky Star* a reality: no mean feat for this "unknown", who refused to sell out.



The following is an interview with Max Fischer, director of the feature film *The Lucky Star* — which recently completed shooting in Montréal and Holland. Born in Egypt and now a Canadian by marriage, he has lived and worked in many places. He speaks reasonably fluent English with an accent Henry James would have found charming.

We met recently in the building which houses Télé-Métropole and Sonolab's editing facilities. He was accompanied by his wife, Susannah, and the three of us sat huddled in a corner of the cafeteria trying to look inconspicuous amidst the coffee-breakers. He began at the beginning...

Max Fischer: At the outset I was a student of two disciplines — Literature and Philosophy, and at the same time I took a course in the History of Art, which developed into Archeology and then Egyptology — especially the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th dynasties, which were my

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areas of specialization. At least I tried to specialize!

I was first confronted by the cinema when I was a kind of advisor on certain American super films made about Egypt, like *Land of the Pharaohs* and *The Ten Commandments*. My advice wasn't completely followed, but it was an extraordinary experience for a young man to be involved in these huge productions, with these monsters like De Mille and Howard Hawkes — fantastic, unbelievable.

Cinema Canada: Epics...

Max Fischer: Yes, real super epics. I was not in Hollywood with them for the interiors, but I was with them on location, advising where to shoot, or making remarks on the designs of the sets — where everything was wrong, of course!

Cinema Canada: But they 'looked' good.

Max Fischer: They looked very, very good; but historically, they were completely wrong. Costumes, everything... But it was exciting! At the same time I was doing that, I was a film critic, earning my living... well, earning my free passes to the cinemas.

As well, I created the first Ciné-Club in Egypt in collaboration with Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française, who was a very, very dear friend of mine. Later, I was asked to do a series of films on Egyptology for the university and, of course, this was a gift from God. I did twenty-six films on ancient Egypt.

Cinema Canada: *The Lucky Star* isn't your first feature?

Max Fischer: No, it's my third.

Cinema Canada: Were the other two distributed in North America?

Max Fischer: One was. It's called — and in spite of the title it is not a pornographic film — *Wet Dreams*. Actually, it was a success here in Canada, and received very, very good critical reaction. It opened in France at the Cinémathèque in Paris, and I must admit that most of the major critics were in attendance, and I received unexpectedly good reviews: I didn't believe them myself. That was five years ago. It was a very strange film, where some of the world's most famous people expressed their sexual fantasies; like Nicholas Ray, the great English playwright, Heathcote Williams, Dusan Makajev...

Cinema Canada: How did *The Lucky Star* come about? Is it your original idea?

Max Fischer: No. The idea is from an

original story called *La Belle Etoile* by the famous French illustrator Roland Topor. When I first saw it I flipped because I thought the idea was absolutely fantastic. I thought it could be better treated as a film, so I re-wrote it from the original. When I started to get some interest from various producers I jumped to get the screenplay written. I got Jack Rosenthal, three-time Academy Award winner and one of our greatest living writers, to do a screenplay.

Cinema Canada: So it's his adaptation of your adaptation?

Max Fischer: Right, if you describe it that way.

Cinema Canada: Well, he's credited with...

Max Fischer: ...Screenplay.

They asked me to name my price and I replied that I didn't have a price.

Cinema Canada: Really?

Max Fischer: It is still his screenplay in a sense. Actually, you've put your finger on it, because in the film business this is a very strange area. There are certain terminologies which are not very precise, you see. What is a screenplay? People put a credit on a screenplay, but it's difficult. How do you define a screenplay? I wrote the original 120 pages; then I gave it to Rosenthal and he converted it into 120 pages of screenplay, with dialogue, where the words brought things to life. Mine was, you know, a story.

Cinema Canada: So yours was like a sketch and his became a portrait.

Max Fischer: Right. Exactly. Then I got it back and did a shooting script out of the Rosenthal version.

Cinema Canada: At what point in all of this did financing come in?

Max Fischer: All of it, up to script completion, was financed by me. We spent a lot of money, and four years. Three times we had opportunities to do the film, with Americans, with the French, and with the Germans. The Americans were very generous with their offers because they wanted to buy the property. They offered me an incredible amount of money, but I told them I was not interested in selling. I wanted to direct the film, and as I was unknown, and still am, they wanted someone else to direct. In effect, they wanted to pay me a lot of money for not directing — and I refused. They asked



Fischer is the focus for this crowd on location with **The Lucky Star**

me to name my price and I replied that I didn't have a price. They said, *everybody* has a price, what's yours? So I waited four years until I found somebody who had trust in me and would allow me to do it.

Cinema Canada : *Your status here in Canada, did that allow you to make the film?*

Max Fischer : Yes, because I am married to a Canadian, I am a Canadian — it was very simple.

Cinema Canada : *You've been accepted as a Canadian director?*

Max Fischer : Yes, as soon as I decided to come and live here.

Cinema Canada : *Part of your reason to come and live here then, is because of the growing film industry. Do you feel that Canada is the place where you can make your films?*

Max Fischer : Personally, I think that Canada is the only country in the world today that has a chance of doing something in the film industry that Europe has never been able to do. Let's face it, I mean this has been my fight for twenty years, and for twenty years I have lost my fight. I'll explain why. I went to the expense in Europe of working my head off, making commercials and other films, which I enjoyed doing because they were the perfect platform for learning the film business — lights, editing, cameras, everything. I bought myself a studio to make myself completely independent; all the camera equipment you can think of, a sound engineer, and the facilities to explore the possibilities of sound. Then I concentrated as much as possible within my studio on getting the freedom to create films. And I never succeeded.

Yes, I made **Wet Dreams** and I succeed very much in helping others — people like Martin Scorsese, whose first

feature film was finished thanks partly to my facilities and the help I gave him. With my equipment I helped Nicholas Ray and lots of other people to finish their films. But still, no matter what you have in Europe, you cannot go with the high price of films: you cannot penetrate world distribution of films. It is impossible. You are blocked, and it's a terrible situation. Who in the world sees Italian films? And we all know they are the best. Who does? **A Special Day**, yes — but it was the exception.

Cinema Canada : *And it was a Canadian co-production.*

Max Fischer : Here we are. But a brilliant film like **Bread and Chocolate**, which I saw in Italy nine years ago, and came back shouting that it was beautiful and brilliant, took seven years to get out of Italy. Let's face it, if it isn't spaghetti westerns or karate films, they don't get out of Italy. Where are the films that come

out of France? Few, if any. Do you know anybody who sees Japanese films? One or two Kurasawa. This means what? It is a question of distribution.

...these companies are practically impenetrable.

World distribution is in the hands of three, four, or five major companies, and these companies are practically impenetrable — if they decide not to give you the possibility, you don't get it. Yet the world market is overflowing with absolute trash, and you know it as well as I do! It's incredible... I mean the trash that is shown from Timbukto to Cairo, from Tel Aviv to Delhi, it's unbelievable...while **Bread and Chocolate** remains in Italy.

But I think that Canada — being so close to the United States, and with the financial possibilities and a lot of intelligence — could penetrate the world distribution market. I think *that's* what's important.

My friend, Henri Langlois' biggest dream was to create a world chain of cinemas, and a completely independent distribution system. He had already bought three cinemas in France to be able

to start such an independent circuit, but unfortunately, he died before he could start it. He had begun negotiations with a group in Holland and they, too, were interested in creating an alternative world film distributing possibility. And that's what I think about Canada's potential. This potential should be exploited to open up distribution possibilities. Part of the money available should be dedicated to opening up channels of distribution. You must create the films *and* create the distribution markets at the same time. What is the use of making films if you haven't got the distribution?

Cinema Canada: *Is the distribution of The Lucky Star set?*

Max Fischer: I don't know. That's in the hands of the producer. I think it is and I hope it is. I mean, I am busy finishing my film. But it is very important. If not, Canada will fall into the same problem that Italy has. Of course, Canada has some advantages: it is English-speaking, there is a common border with the Americans, Canada can use the American star system to penetrate, and all of that. And the things Canada is doing, like encouraging more and more co-productions, **A Special Day** and other films — if the world cinema can channel their films through Canada by way of co-productions, it is already an enormous step.

Cinema Canada: *Some people seem to feel that the Canadian film industry is in the business of making films to be seen at drive-ins.*

Max Fischer: You know, it is very early to decide. You cannot change the public. The film industry is a very expensive industry and the money that is put into a film has to regenerate itself and create new money, or we are going to face the end of the industry before it starts. I agree with your assessment of some of these films, although I don't make them and I never go and see them. But the general public has to go and see these films in order for there to be money rolling in; then, probably, some of that money can be dedicated to, let's say, 'better' films. It is impossible to start out making what we call 'better films' for a limited audience, because what we will do is kill the industry.

I am making **The Lucky Star** because this film has both sides to it, and one shouldn't go without the other. I mean there are sensational films which are also money-makers; **Amarcord**, for example. Many excellent films are not only fine public films, but also great stories with great direction. The history of the cinema has known people like Frank Capra and Howard Hawkes and Hitchcock; films which are seen again and again. They are

great films in every sense; they made money and they are monuments to the history of cinema. Today, because seven people want to be intellectual, they seem to want to annoy the public, and so we get into Rohmer: I adore Rohmer, but the big public does not. I have seen them walk out of Rohmer films. He is limited to Ciné-clubs. I think that film absolutely needs the Hawkes' and the Capras and the Hitchcocks — we need these people, their energy, their power.

Cinema Canada: *Working here in Canada, do you feel pressured to make a certain kind of film? Have you been granted the time and the possibilities to make the film as you envisioned it?*

Max Fischer: Yes. Absolutely. I must admit that I have been. Let's face it, when you are a professional and you talk to a producer and you decide to make a film, you say, okay, we've got this amount of money and a certain schedule to do it in. If you're a professional, a good director, you try to do it within the scheduled time without making any concessions. Of course, you can't do **The Ten Commandments** with ten people making the pyramids; but this is only an example, not an excuse.

The work of a producer is to find money and it's very difficult. I have an enormous amount of respect for people who can rise on what? On wind. The same amount of money that is put into a film you could put into estates, or whatever, where you are sure to make money. I think it's remarkable that a guy from nowhere can convince people to put their money into a film.

Cinema Canada: *When you spoke of the difficulty of penetrating world distribution markets, you mentioned the American star system. In The Lucky Star you have two 'star's'; were they your idea?*

Max Fischer: Yes, Louise Fletcher was my idea completely. Louise has been involved in this film for three years, since I met her for the first time. Steiger has been, not imposed, but suggested, along with a number of other people; and of course, since he is a great actor, there was no problem. We are living in a system of stars.

Cinema Canada: *And the casting of the boy Brett Marx?*

Max Fischer: The casting of the boy came about through sessions organized by Steve Spielberg when I first went to Los Angeles about three years ago. He organized calls in New York and Los Angeles — about a hundred kids in all.



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But we didn't find the right one. In the end, we saw about 400 kids.

Cinema Canada : *Did you cast in Canada as well?*

Max Fischer : No, for the simple reason that Canada came about at the last moment. *The Lucky Star's* history is a very funny one. In desperation — because I couldn't do the film in America as I had wanted to do, because of the problems we were talking about earlier — I said, what the hell! The film could have been made a long time ago in Holland, but what the hell's the use of making a Dutch film that will never be shown? Have you ever seen a Dutch film? Holland makes beautiful cinema, but nobody sees it.

That's why I wanted to do it in America. Then came France, where we had the same problems, and finally, Germany. I said yes at that point, and I would have had an interesting cast — Liv Ullman and Gert Frobe — and the money was okay. I went to my lawyer in Paris to sign the contracts with the German producers; but you know how lawyers are — he said he had doubts about the deal. He asked me if I would reconsider making the film elsewhere if the money was right, and I said I had no objections provided I got to make the film. Anyway, he went out of his office and left me there, and when he returned he had my Canadian producer, Claude Léger, with him. Claude just happened to be in Paris and that's how this all started.

It was just sheer coincidence. I mean, if I had gone to my lawyer's office one day

Canada needs good stories...that's the secret.

before or one day after, I would not have met Claude Léger. It was an accident; and by another accident I was a Canadian and the whole thing just fit together. We made a deal in no time at all. Otherwise, the film would have been German today, and again, nobody would have seen it! But seriously, Germany is in the midst of gaining back its position, what with Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders.

Cinema Canada : *You used a number of local actors in the film.*

Max Fischer : Yes, as many as I could: Yvon Dufour gave a beautiful performance; Jean Gascon, you just can't imagine how good he is. He has a scene with Brett in the confessional and it's one of the greatest moments of the film. Gascon is unbelievable. And Guy L'Ecuyer, very, very good; and Isabel Majesse, she

should be a big star some day. Canada has some great actors in these people.

Cinema Canada : *And if the film is well distributed, maybe they'll all get their due.*

Max Fischer : I hope so. I think that Canada needs good stories — although I'm not necessarily talking about *The Lucky Star*, because maybe it's a complete miss; I don't know, I have to wait. But that's the secret. That was the secret of Frank Capra, and most other great filmmakers.

Cinema Canada : *Although I try to avoid reading synopses — because they can usually turn the greatest film ever into something that sounds too preposterous — what struck me about the synopsis of this film was that there was very little grey area. When you examine it in clumps, this boy's development from a happy childhood through the devastation of war, to a cowboy fantasy, you say to yourself that at any moment it could turn into utter nonsense. As a result, it would seem that you will either end up with a good film, or a total miss. Is that a fair assessment?*

Max Fischer : It's a very fair assessment.

Cinema Canada : *Are you optimistic?*

Max Fischer : Oh yes, very; because the rushes are fantastic, the scenes are fantastic; everything that has been edited up to now has an incredible look to it. And, as in everything that I do, and have always done in my life, there is lots and lots of humor. I think that without humor you just can't make it. In the works of great filmmakers there is always humor; not that I put myself in that echelon, but there is always a sense that they don't take themselves too seriously. I never take myself seriously, and I always doubt what I am doing.

Cinema Canada : *What are your plans for the future?*

Max Fischer : I have a television series I am thinking about and I am writing certain things now. I'd like to write and direct because it is very difficult to find a script. Although I had the facilities to do features for many years, one of the reasons I didn't was the lack of good scripts. What's the use of making something you don't believe in.

Since *The Lucky Star* I've been offered a few things. People have heard that I can direct, that I can work inside a schedule and inside a budget, and these are very important; but the scripts I've been offered are so bad, you can't imagine. The trash that is written is just unbelievable.

Cinema Canada : *You've spoken at length about distribution problems, so how would you feel if your film was ready for release but there were no immediate takers? Would you continue to try and get your film distributed as widely as possible, or is your work over when the film is finished?*

Max Fischer : Well, my work is over when the film is finished, yes. I have other commitments. The problem is that I am weak in this situation. The financial side is, unfortunately, so different from my world that I am at a loss.

Cinema Canada : *Should those two worlds come together?*

Max Fischer : There are certain brilliant people who are able to produce and direct. The two worlds are sometimes compatible, but not in my case.

Cinema Canada : *But will you not feel disappointed if the film that you've lived with for the last five or six years isn't seen?*

Max Fischer : Yes, very.

Cinema Canada : *Who would be the ideal audience for *The Lucky Star*?*

Max Fischer : General, a total absolute audience. It's a story that has, in principle, all the ingredients: excitement, suspense, humor, gentleness.

Cinema Canada : *How important is it to you to have a critical success?*

Max Fischer : I would like both — commercial and critical. I've looked for that in everything I've done. I have already made experimental and art films, and I think I've gotten those out of my system. I know I can do them and I know I can bore the public to death!

Cinema Canada : *And please the critics?*

Max Fischer : And please the critics. Now, I want to take off from that — and please the public. □

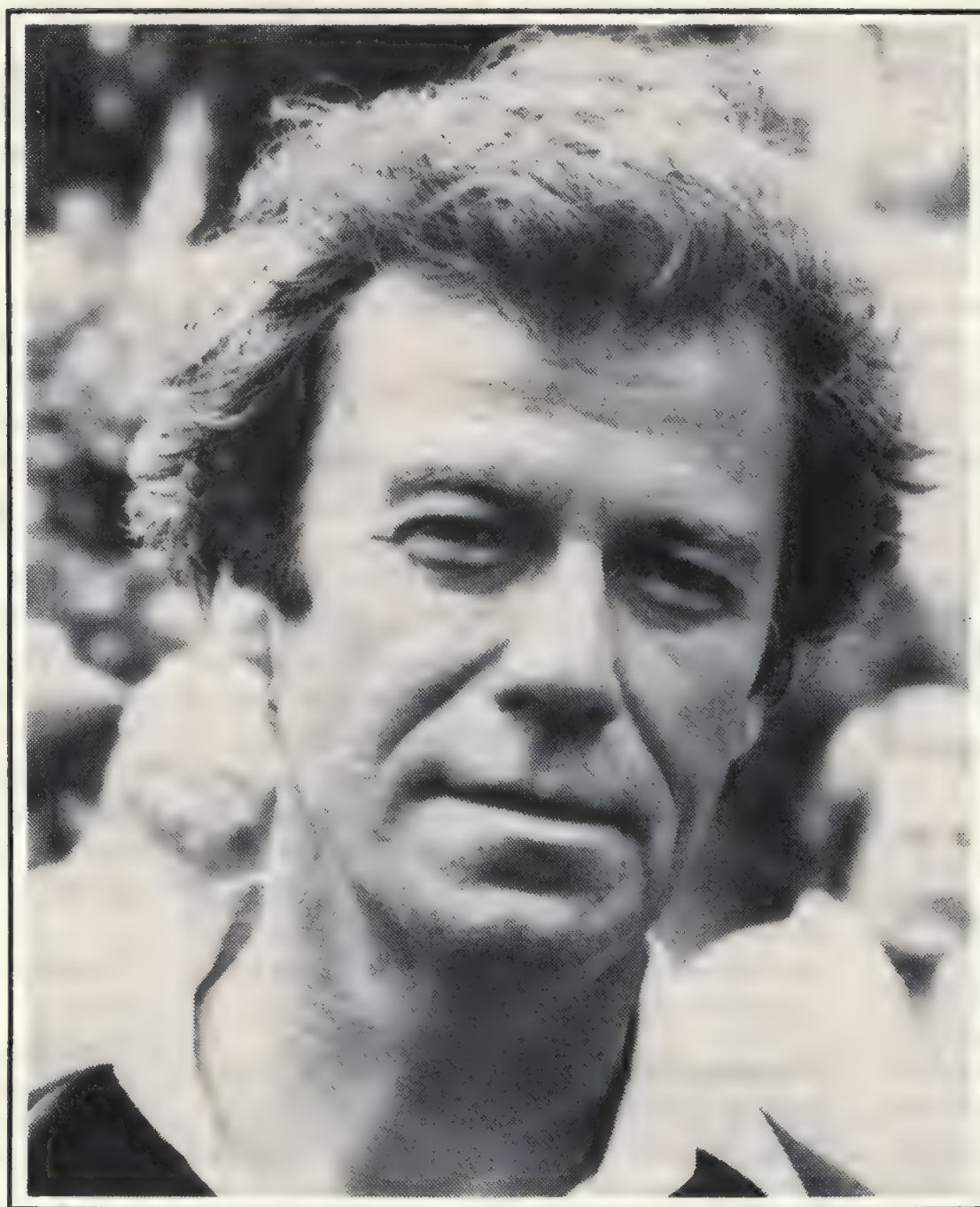
THE LUCKY STAR

d. Max Fischer asst. d. Pierre Magny sc. Max Fischer adapt./dial. Jack Rosenthal ph. Frank Tidy ed. Yves Langlois sd. Patrick Rousseau a.d. Michel Proulx cost. Jany Van Huber l.p. Rod Steiger, Louise Fletcher, Lou Jacobi, Brett Marx exec.p. André Fleury p. Claude Léger assoc. p. Pieter Kroonenburg p. manager Matthew Vibert loc. man. Didier Hoffman unit pub. Denise Di Novi p.c. Caneuram Films Inc. pub. David Novek, Lucienne Appel for Berger & Assoc.

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this porky pig's
maple leaf sweater**



by charles lazer

Gordon Pinsent thinks it's high time to rescue the Canadian film industry from the carpet-baggers. For all the ballyhoo and rustle of bucks, he's convinced that the rug is being 'yanked' out from under us.

Gordon Pinsent came to national prominence in the mid-sixties as our television MP, Quentin Durgens. A few years later he showed us he was as good a writer as he was an actor by writing and starring in *The Rowdyman* and recently, in *A Gift to Last*. But he is not only acclaimed as a screenwriter and an actor; he has made his presence felt in the industry as a man of integrity and intelligence — a performer committed to the development of Canadian film and theatre.

On the occasion of his most recent award, a Genie for his performance in *Klondike Fever*, Cinema Canada took the opportunity to talk to him. Pinsent considered the once and future Canadian film industry and his place in it.

"I feel that I've made a very big commitment here, and happily so. It took very little thought, really, because it's nice to be part of something big. It's bigger than ever, and it looks as though it's going to be a fact.

"But I'm no longer interested in just putting time into a way of life that does not have something at the other end of the tunnel.

"Speaking for myself as a performer, when I face an opportunity, I ask myself, 'Is it going to benefit me? Can I improve? Can I learn? Are we going to make it work for us? And am I going to be part of it all? Or am I simply going to grab mine off the top?'

"I want to be part of a viable industry, but I don't want us to bog ourselves down doing only a kind of material that will not work for us — that will not prepare us for something else."

The capital cost allowance, and the resulting boom in "tax shelter films" has not been an unmixed blessing. Too many producers are concerned only with the tax advantages to be found in film, and not at all with the quality of the movies that they turn out.

"We still have the problem of producing as opposed to producing! We need those private sector type people who are interested in making good films — telling our stories — instead of just hiding money. In my own life, I have been approached by people who, I have every reason to believe, in my closeted writer's scope, are only interested in hiding money.

"Well, I know how much work, and you know how much work goes into writing a screenplay, and attempting to get something off the ground. It's a great strain and a lot of worry.

"But isn't it funny, if you are in the creative end, that they can see you coming — these people that can't create worth a damn themselves — they can see you coming and they think, 'How can we best use that man's integrity? How best to take that late innocent from Newfoundland and his precious time? Wonder if it's worth anything? Let's go get that Porky Pig! Give him a good shake, and see how we can use him!'

"I'm feeling extra paranoid these days because I'm doing good stuff, and here it will sit, unless I get out and sell it. We don't have those people in the middle that say, 'Give me that! Let me run with it!'

Charles Lazer is a free-lance screenwriter and producer currently working in Toronto and Montreal.

"Nobody says it's easy to get things produced. But some things should be easy, and one of them should be access to people who can produce. And I don't just mean send it to a producer because I happen to know one and you don't. There should be a 'gimme' attitude here, so that we as factory workers can get our work done and ship it out, get it back, work on it again — so that we have some sort of feeling that we're all part of it.

"I've got three or four scripts, right now, and I know if I were to go down and spend a couple of sleazy weeks on Sunset Boulevard, I could make a deal. And this is what people are going to do, because we don't have creative producers here who are going to help us get things going. I can't possibly go around thinking my stuff is not worth doing, so I have to find ways to do it. It's as simple as that.

"Right now I'm working on a three-pronged project: a stage play, a film, and maybe a book. It's not *Jaws*, but it will make a wonderful play for someone. Oddly enough, it's set in California, about a Canadian who goes down there to work in this industry. The theme being, 'Is there life after ambition?' I'm working desperately to get that ready for the Toronto Theatre Festival.

"I won't produce. In a way, I'm insulted if I have to produce. That's putting together some muscle that doesn't come naturally to me. It's one thing for me to say I'm happy with the day's work that I did — I'm happy with the finished script. But I'd like a phone call that says, 'So are we. Let's go out and do it!'



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"I'm not eager to sell my work outright. I want to participate. I want to direct film — to extend myself by directing. I have no intention of giving up performing. My writing was originally supposed to fill the bill when I wasn't acting. Now I use the writing for some good reasons, not the least of which is staying sane. Now I want to extend that thread by directing."

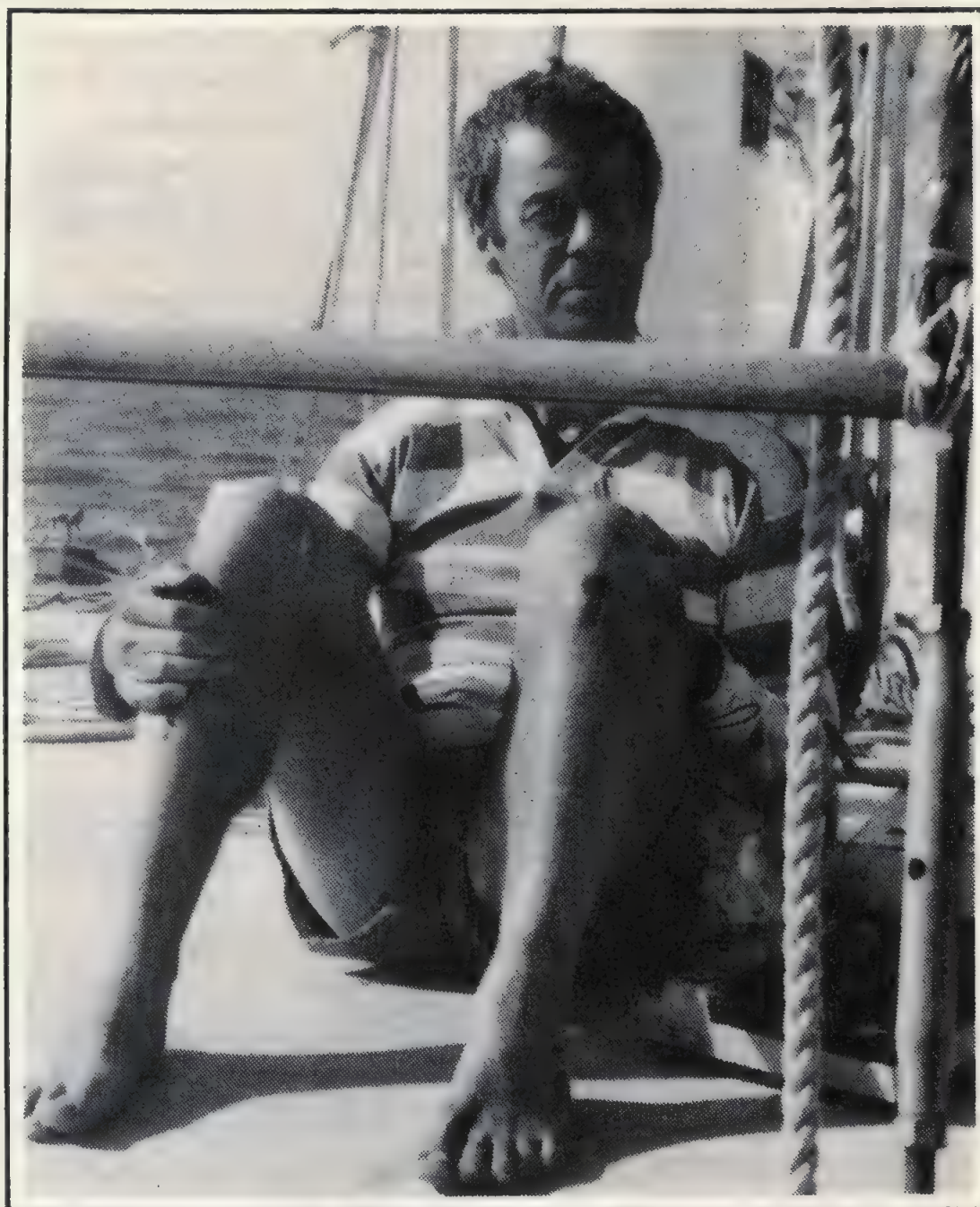
These desires notwithstanding, Pinsent has cut back on his other activities to concentrate on his writing. He stopped *A Gift to Last* and has turned down other work in order not to repeat himself and go back to the old patterns. He is a dedicated, disciplined writer.

But he worries that the artists — and performers — have no control over the industry they give so much to; that quality is all too often determined by producers and accountants who have little interest in the quality of a film.

They're avoiding the material.

"It frightens me that it's completely out of our control. In this country, you can be wildly congratulated for things that you've done, and turn right around the following morning and you can't get arrested! You've got to go out and do it all again yourself!

"The producers who say there's a lack of material in this country are avoiding the issue. They're avoiding the material. There's a whole raft of producers out there who



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don't need to find good material. If they do, fine...But in the meantime, I have the spookiest idea that if you were one hell of a screenwriter, and you had great ideas, they could avoid you — go around you — and get on with their plans, which don't include you or your good writing.

"The sad thing will be when we round up all our films and we won't have said anything about ourselves. We don't try our best. Americans expect a lot of themselves, they demand a lot of themselves, and they try their best. Well, we also try *their* best.

"The things that are happening in this country are not getting us a satisfying image for film. We don't even have a good name in Hollywood right now.

"But we can be as good as anyone anywhere. The crews, the technicians, are wonderful! They're ready, they're interested — these guys are working!

"Our talent has been doing the same thing, but in more of an underground, a commando way. They haven't been getting the same kind of opportunities the crews have been getting.

"Performers in this country, performers anywhere, have a very tough job. A character actor becomes more interesting with age, but a leading man between jobs just waits. And those jobs are not coming too quickly in this country.

"So not only do they lose the continuity of experience, but by the time they do work again they'll probably be too old to learn lines, and they'll have to go to the bathroom a lot, and you know that'll play hell with the budget!

"If our performers get good roles, they'll get the recogni-



Above : Linda Goranson and Pinsent in **The Rowdyman**. Below : **The Heat Wave Lasted Four Days** — but what perfect weather for shooting !

tion. But we've got to work for that — to keep the continuity. But Canadians have always been slow to hold up their hands in class.

I feel like the Plastic Man...

"The solution for the writer is to use the technique that I'm using now. It's called doing it; finishing it. Send out your scripts. When you get your rejections you go into a dark room and you get on with it. If your rejections have anything useful in them, use it. Use it all. Get it down to a point where no one can reject it — no one with a conscience."

Gordon Pinsent's career in film has been notable for its growth and development. He prides himself on being able to formulate and execute a plan whereby he can maintain his independence. He sustains the feeling that he is a very special person.

This same sense of purpose can be applied to the Canadian film industry. Pinsent is not content to be merely a part of the industry, he wants to have a say, along

with the rest of us, in directing its development. And that direction should be back to telling our own stories.

"I feel like the Plastic Man of the comic books. I can change shape — our whole industry is going to be changing shape for awhile. But we've got to be the landlords, not the tenants. We've got to decide what kind of industry we want to have, and then we can get on with the business of becoming part of it.

"I think we'll end up telling good stories again. We started out telling good stories, with **The Rowdyman**, **Goin' Down the Road**, **Wedding in White**, **Who Has Seen the Wind**.

"If we go back and pick up some of those values and get on with it again, that won't be such a bad thing. And I think even the quick thinkers, the flash-in-the-panners, are aware that this is going to have to happen again, right around their funny toes.

"I get the feeling that I've been walking around here an awfully long time, with a wonderfully expensive knitted sweater with a maple leaf on it. But it's being ravelled! Somebody's got the goddamn string and it's being ravelled and I can't save it! It's still an expensive sweater, but it's being ravelled, and some other cat at the other end is knitting an American sweater, with the Stars and Stripes! Sometimes I don't know whether to pull it back or let it go. But in the end, I've got to pull it back and wind it all up again.

"We've got to roll that ball up and start knitting that sweater again — or otherwise, we're going to be pretty damn cold up here!" □



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skimming the black fantastic

by jeffrey marvin



The *Black Ice* film crew had to master iceboating in sub-zero weather to make their film. Jeffrey Marvin explains how they did it, and Anne Frank reviews the end result.

Soon it's full speed ahead for these iceboats, approaching the starting line in the Canadian Iceboating Championship

The National Film Board of Canada undertook the ardent task of filming Canadian Iceboating Champion, Don Walton, as he tracked the winter wind on the fierce iceboat racing circuit.

A circuit encompassing a radius of approximately 600 miles, the crew of **Black Ice** travelled to points in and around Toronto, Hamilton, Northern Ontario, and Ohio, capturing the sport of iceboat racing on film.

Perhaps the only drawback to the making of **Black Ice** was our dependence upon a combination of weather conditions. While skiers need snow, and soft-water sailors need wind, iceboaters pray for ice and wind, plus an absence of snow and rain. Understandably, good iceboating areas are few and far between. But construction compensates for these conditions: iceboats are capable of being quickly assembled and disassembled with bare hands, in subfreezing weather, and are designed for easy transportation on a trailer or car roof.

We tracked Don Walton racing his DN Class iceboat. The DN's are characterized for their streamlined hulls (for wind resistance), regulation 60 sq. ft. sail, and three runners or skate-like blades that glide over the ice with minimum friction. The DN weighs about 125 lbs. yet is capable of reaching speeds of 60 m.p.h. and more. In fact, the lightweight DN can travel almost four times the speed of the wind.

As all of our filming took place outdoors with temperatures well below freezing, both our cameras had to be winterized. Filming in 35mm, we choose the Arriflex 35BL, due to its easy hand-holding ability, and the Arriflex IIC for its rugged design.

Preparing for the start of the season, we ran several tests using various methods of tracking the boats. Initially we tried tracking by snowmobile, but the procedure would only yield footage of high vibrational quality. Next we opted for a Steadicam, but in the extreme cold we felt the electronics would give us trouble. Finally, we decided on boat-to-boat tracking.

Mounts were made out of aluminum and built to fit either an Arri flat base plate or a high-hat adapter. Also, a motorized rotating plate was incorporated into the mounting system: this enabled pre-selected panning from point to point. The entire system ran off a 16 volt battery and could be moved via sandwich clamps to virtually any position on the hull or runner plank of the iceboat.

*Jeffrey Marvin is a documentary filmmaker and free-lance writer. He was line producer and writer for **Black Ice**.*

The next challenge was for cameraman Michael Savoie to learn how to sail the rigged boat to assure proper framing. After some hair-raising first attempts, the results were better than we ever anticipated. By having the camera mounted right onto the boat, the boat and camera were able to vibrate in sync, creating very little distortion of the picture. Manned with this new system we were ready to undertake any shot that director Peter Shatalow could dream up.

Luckily the weather held out, and we were fortunate to film some exciting racing sequences in Hamilton Harbour, Lake Scugog and The Bay of Quinte — the panning system enabled us to swiftly manoeuvre back and forth through the racers without disturbing their ponderous progress. And ponderous is putting it mildly.

An iceboat is subject to tremendous forces on its rigging, hull, planks and chokes (its construction is a compromise between weight and strength that is literally held together by pins). As a result, it is not unusual for something to break while at high speeds. Masts and stays can also snap under high gust loads.

In a typical race situation there are boats to avoid, tacks to be made (unlike sail boats, an iceboat travels faster tacking into the wind than it does with the wind), and markers to be rounded — which indicate where you must head. But even more common obstacles to avoid are pressure ridges in the ice, water holes, sudden gusts of wind that can send an iceboat into abrupt hiking, and break-up — a situation that left producer David Springbett "sweating bullets" with the apprehension of our camera boat breaking up. Fortunately, during our entire two winters of shooting we lost only one runner plank, resulting in minor damage solely to the boat.

Despite the seeming irregularity of perfect iceboating conditions, we were able to shoot with lenses as tight as 50mm, no matter what ice conditions prevailed. But the real treat came in Hamilton Harbour when we encountered **Black Ice**. Like a freshly waxed linoleum floor, **Black Ice** is that newly-frozen water which gives a flawless consistency. Its clear, clean surface is the ultimate condition sought by all iceboaters. As racer Don Walton puts it, "It's like a giant hand grabbing the boat and shoving it skimming across the ice. The speed is fantastic." Coming off the ice, Walton was ready to take on the world. And so he did.

Following the Canadian Team to the World Championships in Sandusky, Ohio, proved to be our toughest assignment. The weekend was brutal with high winds

and skin temperatures of -40°. Many of the boats on hand, from as far away as the USSR, snapped under these pressures. It was so cold that our Arriflex 35BL froze solid. But second unit cameraman Mark Irwin, using the "olde" ICC pulled through. Filming from within the hazardous downwind marker, close-up shots were obtained just as the boats pivoted upwind. Many boats were photographed in full hike, lines snapping from inertia.

In addition, we employed the use of a 1500mm Questar lens, which is really a telescope. A two-man operation, the Questar has one field-searching element as well as the normal lens viewing port. By having one man scan the subject through the searching element while the other maintains focus, it is possible to track a subject at extreme close-up range. This procedure is highly critical as both men must equally coordinate their movements.

Black Ice has taken two years to produce under some of the most adverse filming conditions possible, but we have documented it all. Soon, it will make its movie debut as a 35mm, stereo, theatrical short in theatres across Canada.

John Grierson would have been proud.

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Black Ice : Film Review

p.c. National Film Board of Canada (1978/79) exec.p. Don Hopkins p. David Springbett assoc.p. Michael Savoie d. Peter Shatalow sc. Jeffrey Marvin ph. Michael Savoie addit.p. Mark Irwin cam.assist. Dan Hainey, Jeffrey Marvin ed. Peter Shatalow mus. John Mills-Cockell sd. Ralph Brunjes narr. Jonathan Welsh re.rec. Gary Bourgeois grips Robert Arvay, Jim McCammon p.co-ord. Judy LeGros unit admin. Louise Clark line p. Jeffrey Marvin tech. co-ord. Frank Ciavaglia

Black Ice is a ten-minute film, stunningly shot in 35mm, with a mag-stripe stereo mixed sound track. It is a powerful and energetic film created for commercial theatrical release. It seems to indicate that a strong and enormously beneficial relationship can and does exist between the National Film Board and the independent producer / filmmaker. Michael Savoie and Peter Shatalow of Cedar Films combined their talents with David Springbett of the National Film Board's Ontario regional office, to produce a film that is not only artistically successful, but that also has strong popular appeal. **Black Ice** makes an excellent argument for increased involvement of the private sector with the public, with a view towards creating a unique and viable commercial product.

Based on an idea by Jeffrey Marvin, **Black Ice** opens with a boat skimming across a lake. The sky is clear, the blades are sharp and the boat skims smoothly and swiftly across the ice. A quick cut, and we find ourselves gathering information about the precision needed in the construction of the boat. We feel the care and concentration the sailor devotes to his

craft : all this is a brief series of very tight close-ups — the man's face, his hands, his work. Only those objects which bear a direct relationship to the boat are chosen. The effect is sparse, clean and without superfluous detail. In an extremely dramatic cut we are suddenly whipped back to the frozen lake. The camera is mounted on the boat which is now skimming at 60 miles per hour along the lake surface. Sound builds and gradually becomes inescapable. The blades cutting into the ice become a roar, a cacophony of sound; the wind, the sail and the blades blend together to become synonymous with the speed and the power of the elements.

Images imprint themselves on the senses — men, standing alone or in groups, heavily muffled against the bitter cold. The effect is ominous. There is little individual definition, but somehow, through all of their protective covering, one still senses an incredible expectation and fierce concentration. These men are intent on only three things ; the wind, the sail and that black, black ice.

Rules of competition are stringent and conditions can be treacherous. In spite of the risks ahead, the sailors stamp their impatient feet. They are willing to confront almost anything. They want the exhilaration, they want to win. When thwarted from achieving this objective, they suffer enormous frustrations. A man's boat overturns and his reaction is almost comic in its intensity. From here on in, picture and sound track blend beautifully to create a feeling of anticipation and urgency. The adrenalin begins to flow, the race is on. The viewer is drawn in and the film doesn't relinquish its hold until the very end.

Black Ice is constructed by using a series of almost impressionistic imagery. Its iceboating theme is rendered in a highly subjective manner. The film-

makers have chosen their material primarily for its emotional content, rather than for its explicitly realistic or factual detail. With surprising effectiveness, they have managed to apply both dramatic and documentary principles to their material — a technique which allows them not only to record the actual events of an iceboating experience, but also to engage the viewer on a far deeper emotional level, to give him an almost visceral comprehension of such an experience. On that level, the viewer quite spontaneously feels the hardships, the agonies and the eventual exhilaration of sailing when all conditions are absolutely perfect.

An intuitive understanding of the film's intention is successfully achieved through image and sound. Narration was added to the film, but somehow the words are incompatible with the strength of the image. The two elements work against each other, because much of what is said in words has already been conveyed through picture. When this happens, and it happens inconsistently throughout the film, the narration becomes redundant and could well have been dispensed with altogether.

The emotional appeal of **Black Ice** is achieved by fully exploiting the space and movement intrinsic in the chosen material. The effect is increased by the momentum of Peter Shatalow's superb editing, and by the use of an intriguing technique which could be termed 'heightened' sound. Natural sounds were amplified to appear larger than they were in reality. To this was added synthetic sound, often composed of natural sounds broken into their various components and then subjectively recreated and amplified to achieve a specific effect. Much of this is not immediately apparent, except that one does have a sense of continuing underlying tension. The original music by John Mills-Cockell works extremely well, because it is often integrated with those sounds, or seems to rise out of them. The overall result of the track as a whole is to increase the impelling and vigorous nature of the film.

The cinematography by Michael Savoie is bold, and manages to arouse strong feelings for the beauty of the sport, the severity of the conditions and the challenge to the men involved. Shatalow and Savoie have imprinted a unique style on their material ; as a result, **Black Ice** becomes a film that is not only beautiful to watch, but to experience as well.

Anne Frank

Anne Frank is a free-lance writer, and a producer at the CBC Drama Department in Toronto, where she works on *For The Record*.

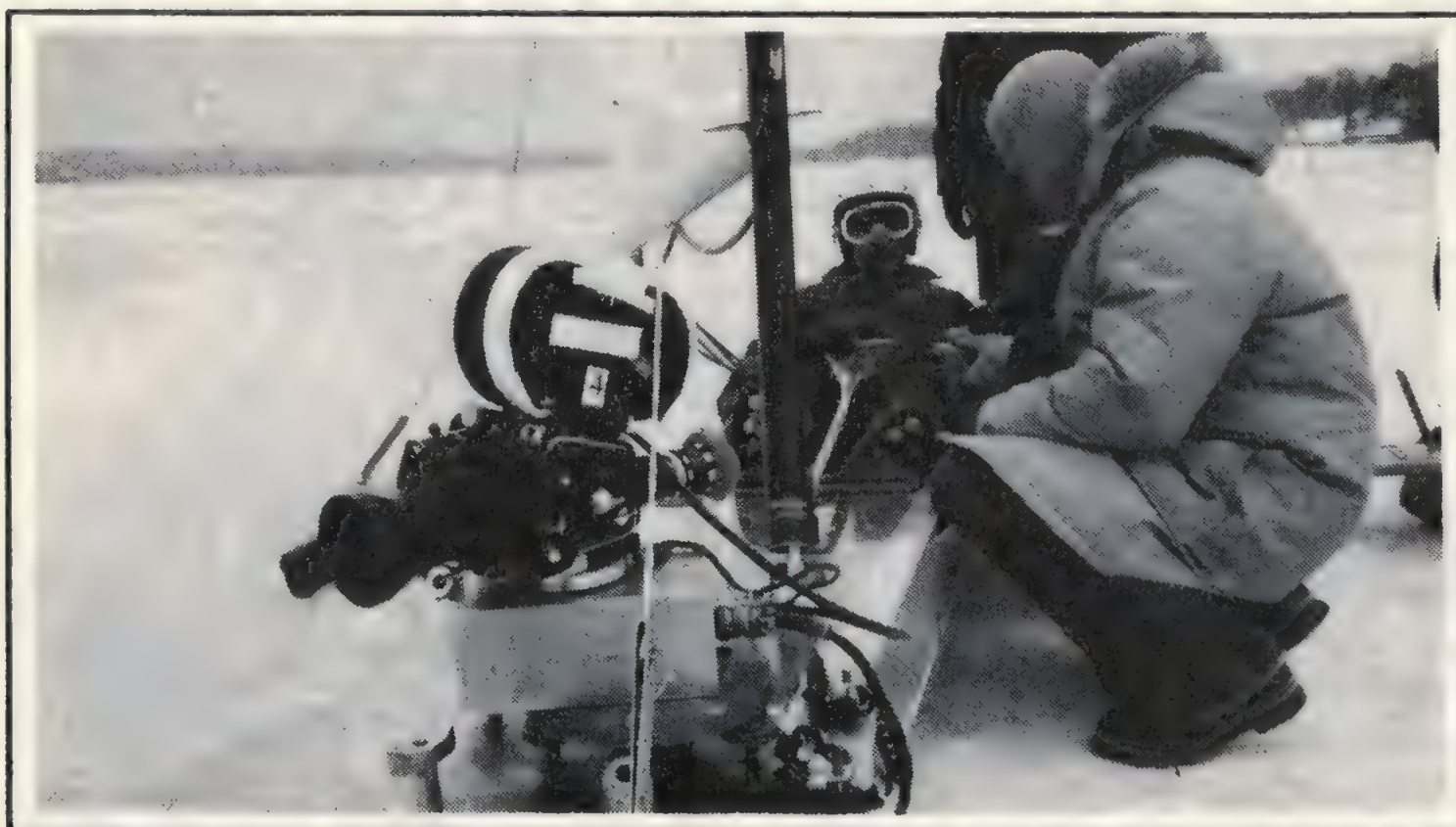


photo : Jeffrey Marvin

About to sail... Walton's boat can travel almost four times the speed of the wind

INTRODUCING...

michael savoie and peter shatalow hot to trot on black ice

"Wow! You just finish a shoot, you come home late at night, your hands and feet are frozen, your ears are aching, your whole body is numb, the wind is whipping around inside your head, your mind is completely whapped, and man, the adrenalin is still pumping! You wanna go out there and shoot it again... It's not a job, it's a joy!" Michael Savoie and Peter Shatalow are high: high on movie-making, high on the success that has been following them steadily for the past seven years.

Cedar Films is their baby. Michael is cameraman/producer and Peter is director/editor. In the three years since the company's conception, these two young men have succeeded in making some twenty-three films.

"Our films are unique in that they are impressionistic," says Michael. "We don't make any pretense about being objective. It's impossible for us to make an objective film — we're completely subjective..."

"We like to make films about people who struggle against incredible odds," cuts in Peter. "People who accomplish, who achieve: we like to share that accomplishment with them."

Their latest and most spectacular achievement thus far is **Black Ice**, a ten minute theatrical short for the National Film Board.

"We could have made a subjective documentary film about iceboating," continues Michael. "But we didn't. We made a drama."

"We were experiencing what those guys were experiencing," adds Peter. "We followed them around for twenty-five days, but the weather wasn't right. We drove for thousands of miles, around and around, looking for those conditions which are in a space about this big (he makes a ball with his hands) and when we did hit it, there was such a sensation of joy that everyone just went wild. The film captures that, and it's nice."

The 'high' started back in St. Catharines,



photo: Sunkist Graphics

Teamwork made it happen for Peter Shatalow and Michael Savoie as they mastered **Black Ice**.

Ont., where Michael and Peter met about ten years ago. "From the first time we met each other we were making our own films." St. Catharines offered little opportunity, so the two headed for Toronto where they both got work at the CBC — Michael as cameraman, Peter as editor. "Working at the CBC was great, but in our spare time we still made short films with our own money."

Eagerly, they studied film technique, absorbing all the knowledge the CBC had to offer. "We were hot to trot, and management knew it." Apparently, Peter is still something of a legend. He went through the editing department in two years. By 1976 Michael and Peter knew it was time to strike out on their own. Cedar Films enabled them to do their own work under their own label.

"High production values and quality

have always been top priorities with us," says Michael. "In fact, we are going to record **Black Ice** in stereo. It's almost unheard of to record even a feature in stereo, but this film cries out for stereo, and we're gonna do it."

There's nothing stopping them. The next step after making some dandy little shorts is to shoot for the big one — features. Michael and Peter have bought the rights to a story, details of which they are hesitant to divulge because, as they say, "Everyone steals ideas from you in this business." If all goes well, they will be ready to roll cameras this fall. What they propose sounds good... Adventure, greed, lust, moral dilemma, great characters, great action, murder — and gold!

"We started this company because I could edit and Michael could shoot film" says Peter. "We could make movies and

we didn't need anyone else. Now we are coming to a point where our assets are different than just being cameraman and editor. We spent last year finding out what it takes to put a feature together, putting packages together, weeding out key people, getting the idea out, getting our profile up. I mean, we know how to do a feature.

"It's important that the industry is built here," reflects Michael. "With the capital cost allowance, the spirit of the law is that an industry be built here, and it's up to the producers to make that work. There's an awful lot of work to be done in the writing end, and in the talent end. I think that it is really important to look for Canadian talent in our films; and when we're absolutely convinced there's no one else, we should look again."

It hasn't all been a picnic. Personal relationships suffer, because Michael and Peter 'think film' twenty-four hours a day. "It's a real sickness, a real disease — it's an obsession called Film, and it occupies every moment."

"Having a partner is no picnic," says Michael, wistfully. "It's like being married. A partnership can be the most wonderful, gratifying, tremendous relationship, and at the same time the most nerve-wracking, terrible, frustrating relationship. It's worse than marriage, because you're in business, and at the bottom line is money. With us of course, it's more than that — because we're friends."

Watch for these two friends. If the energy they've put into their projects continues like it has, you'll be hearing a lot more about them in the future.

Krystyna Hunt

mary stephen shot silk and sensuality

Justocoeur is not the film Mary Stephen wanted to make next. **Justocoeur** is, in her own words, "the story of a dancer who specializes in African rhythms and who becomes involved in a triangular relationship with two men, one of whom is homosexual." Shot in 16mm, colour, with French dialogues translated by Eric Rohmer, it apparently has the Stephen trademark of concern for the five textures of human relationships expressed in what the French call the *intimiste* style. But it isn't **Night Fires** (or as it is now called, **A Slender Thread of Passion/Un mince fil de passion**) — the feature film that this young, expatriate Canadian writer/director hoped to shoot in Paris with Jeanne Moreau and Kate Nelligan.

Shortly after her first feature film, **Shades of Silk**, was released in 1977, Stephen finished the script for a film to be called **Night Fires**. Originally, the synopsis referred to it as a "psychological drama of the games people play when they are face to face with their own... uncertainties." A year later, after some judicious advice from Paul Almond on "selling" a synopsis, it read "an unusual love story," and made a slight bow towards soap opera passions. An agent sent the script to Jeanne Moreau who, within two days of reading it, agreed to play the part of a successful stage and screen star, wife of a jealous actor, and mother of two talented daughters.

That was two years ago. Now, Nicole M. Boisvert of Agora Films is producing the film and the team hopes to begin shooting in the spring. But for Stephen and her partner John Cressey, two frustrating years have already been spent in trying to find the producer and backers. A French investor, who was enthusiastic after seeing **Shades of Silk** at Cannes, pulled out just before filming was about to begin. One Canadian producer felt the project wasn't marketable because Jeanne Moreau wasn't a 'bankable' star. One script reader, hired by an independent producer, said **Night Fires** was the best script he had seen in over a year. Another, with the Canadian Film Development Corporation, sent the script back with, what Stephen called, "incompetent and insulting comments."

It is a commonplace tale among young filmmakers these days. And it takes an indomitable and flexible spirit like Stephen's to keep making films while waiting for the "big break" of a major feature. Stephen is confident, almost blindly so; and she inspires confidence in some remarkable people — in spite of being, as she says, "young, a woman, and Chinese with an English name." Jeanne Moreau has often phoned her at her flat on Paris' Boul. St-Michel, to reassure her "about the difficulties women writers and directors have in getting a major film off the ground." And Stephen counts French filmmaker Eric Rohmer among her friends and enthusiastic patrons. They, at least, are impressed by Mary Stephen. And it was **Shades of Silk** that first revealed her talent to them.

Her early short films include a ten-minute documentary on retarded children (**Independence '73**) shown at the Sir George Williams' Film Festival in 1973, and then on Canadian television; a short film on culture shock (**Labyrinthe**) that was shown twice on Canadian television; a longer documentary on young people travelling across Canada during the summer (**The Great Canadian Puberty Rite**, 1974); and an experimental film on the experience of death (**A Very Easy Death**) that was shown in the Hong Kong Film Festival in 1977. **Shades of Silk**, however, is international in setting, story and cast. It was shot in Paris, premiered at Cinéma Olympique in May 1978, and was shown on the market at both the 1978 and 1979 Cannes Film Festivals.

Set in 1935 in the decadent Chinese



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Mary Stephen's favorite photographer, John Cressey, catches her in a pensive mood.

émigré world of Indochina, it is a poetic story, in the spirit of Marguerite Duras, about the love and separation of two women. All "silk, satins and sensuality," says Derek Hill of Essential Cinema in London (which has picked up the film for redistribution). "It is one of the most erotic films I have seen for a long time."

French audiences and critics were impressed. In *Le Figaro*, critic Michel Marmin called it "un film précieux comme une photographie décolorée dont les mystères nous seraient délicatement dévoilés." Claire Clouzot, in her lengthy review for *Le Matin*, called on **India Song** and **Hiroshima Mon Amour** for comparisons, and encouraged people to see the film if they "aiment à rêver sur des glissements de satin, des ombres de soie, et des ongles laqués de carmin, cependant qu'un gramophone égrène dans la pièce

aux cent mille miroirs quelque chanson rauque, sensuelle et démodée..."

Stephen was a bit surprised. "I didn't expect it to be so successful with audiences. I wanted to make the film because that period fascinates me. It was dreamy, romantic and sensual; the last age of innocence, a voluptuous world unaware of what was going to happen shortly. I suppose it is a "French" film because it is sensitive to the subtleties of film language. But I didn't imagine that people here would like it as much as they did." An encouraging response to a first feature, Stephen assumed **Shades of Silk** would become something of a key to Canadian and French financing for **Night Fires** — a film specifically intended as a large-budget commercial venture.

It didn't; somebody changed the lock guarding Canadian investors. "Commer-

cial" has come to mean something quite specific in Canada. Perhaps it is closest to Richard Norton's script of **Sweet Justice**, which, as reported in the press, "was chosen out of twenty scripts examined by Norton for its mix of action and adventure, a combination he personally favours." Certainly a commercial, Canadian film should avoid what producer Robert Lantos (**In Praise of Older Women and Agency**) calls "the presumptuousness of the exercise of aesthetic masturbation." Roy Birkett, a broker with Mead and Co., agrees, and said in a recent interview that he warns film investors to "buy junk films because they sell."

Since Stephen frequently talks about "artistic integrity," and her interest in French film styles, she presumably fits into the 'presumptuous aesthete' category. Her approach to film emphasizes different values. As John Cressey put it one afternoon, just after returning to Paris from Cannes, "When we make a film it is something we *believe* in, and naturally it will reflect that in devotion, care and energy." Besides, Stephen writes scripts that deal with broad human issues, such as, "a man in search of the Absolute, not knowing whether it exists... only blindly hoping that it does."

Night Fires or **A Slender Thread of Passion** is still in the works. In the meantime, Stephen has been busy. While John Cressey crossed the Atlantic seeking backers, Stephen finished the script for a second feature film. In this film, she imagines an Alan Bates character as a self-exiled hermit. He stumbles into a deserted village in Normandy, where he meets a fifteen-year-old Parisian girl who has run away, from a young love, to her mother's deserted country house in the same village. He falls in love with her, but eventually realizes that little has changed in the world he left twenty-six years earlier.

Then came **Justocoeur** and a small Canada Council grant. **Justocoeur** "is very different from **Shades of Silk**," says Stephen. "It is much colder in a lot of ways (partly because it is shot in Fuji colour which is flatter than Kodak), except for the music. Composed by Guem, one of the best African percussionists in France, the music is hot stuff!" There is also the added titillation of a cameo appearance by the well-known actress / daughter of a certain Canadian diplomat.

Naturally, Stephen is excited about this small film. But she is still waiting for that major feature. A lot of people, in Paris at least, feel it won't be long now.

Boyd Neil

BOOK REVIEWS

Seeing Ourselves; Films for Canadian Studies by James E. Page

National Film Board of Canada, Montreal 1979, vi & 210 pp. \$3.95

Professor James E. Page's **Seeing Ourselves** is a well-written, earnest attempt to provide a source book for the use of film in the teaching of Canadian Studies to students from Kindergarten through University. Page is the current president of the Association for Canadian Studies. He served as part of T.H.B. Symons' Commission on Canadian Studies. To a degree, his book is a response to that Commission's 1976 report, **Knowing Ourselves**, which attempted to rectify the misuse and underuse of audio-visual resources noted in that document.

Responding to that report could have

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been an ambitious undertaking. The 1980 NFB/CBC Catalogue alone lists some 1700 titles. To this would have to be added the resources of private producers, circulating collections, and those archival materials that could be put into at least limited distribution.

Seeing Ourselves however, does not represent a digestion of the total resources available. Instead, it concentrates on some 300 titles from the current NFB/CBC catalogue. Of these, 130 films receive detailed treatment under topic headings that include: Art and Artists, French-English Relations, History, Literature, Native Studies, Political Process, Quebec, Regional Studies, Urban Studies and Women's Studies. A second section provides 200 to 500-word reviews of the selected films, while titles that failed to make the final cut receive sporadic reference throughout. The indexing is formidable.

While Page makes the standard disclaimer — i. e. that much of his selection is a matter of personal taste — his method of choosing films does leave room for argument beyond mere quibbles over individual titles. The decision to exclude films made outside the NFB and CBC is itself worth protesting. While **Seeing Ourselves** was sponsored by the NFB, it is being distributed through the Canadian Film Institute — an organization with a responsibility to the entire Canadian film community. The book leaves the reader wondering whether any of Canada's independent filmmakers may have produced anything worth studying under the topic of Art and Artists, French-English Relations, Native Studies, the Political Process, Quebec, or Women's Studies. Certainly a large addendum, and perhaps something of an apology, is needed.

The bias against privately-produced films carries over to a bias against older works. Barely ten percent of the films chosen by Page were made before 1970. In this respect, he treats the past even more shabbily than does the NFB or the CBC. In their 1980 catalogue, the two public institutions reserve approximately 25 percent of their collection for films more than a decade old. Had Page gone beyond this one source, the bias toward

more recent work would be even more apparent — and even less justified. More importantly, the inclusion of archival films might have served to bring these works into general distribution. While teachers should be made aware of Nancy Ryley's 1972 *Grey Owl*, they should also know that the original *Grey Owl* films exist. Their demand for those films could make them more easily available.

The third bias reflected in the selection is that against drama, or dramatic reconstruction, alternate forms of documentary and film as art. Page does his duty by asking teachers to alert their students to the fictional nature of acted segments within documentaries, such as the *Adventures in History* series. But beyond that, he is reluctant to recommend dramatic material other than the obvious (*Drylanders*), and the unquestionably outstanding (*The Best Damned Fiddler from Calabogie to Kaladar*). Why does he not take full advantage of the possibilities for Women's studies inherent in King's *Maria*, or consider what Carle has to say about Quebec in *The Merry Life of Leopold Z*? More importantly, could he not discuss filmed drama as part of Canadian culture and, at the same time, come to terms with the use of drama in the documentary context?

What about coming to terms with documentary itself? Although Page includes Rubbo's *Waiting for Fidel* in the top 300, the film doesn't make the final cut — I suspect, because it lacks that voice of God firmness that characterizes most of the book's choices. Certainly, depriving any public school class of Rubbo's *Sir! Sir!* — because it doesn't teach in a didactic, straightforward manner — is at least a misdemeanor. More seriously, the role of citizens addressing the political process as presented in the *Challenge for Change* films cannot be ignored, even if these films are less accessible than standard social studies expositions. It is the role of a book like **Seeing Ourselves** to not only mention these films, but to take on the difficult task of providing a context for their use.

Finally, one is at a loss to understand why Page does not make a more extensive use of those films that would be most

appealing to young audiences — the NFB's extensive animation collection. Again, the most obvious choices are present Low's *Romance of Transportation in Canada*, as are the prestige films (Leaf's *The Street*). But what about the work of Co Hoedeman? And Norman McLaren? **Seeing Ourselves** may be the first book-length publication by the Board to completely ignore McLaren. This may sound like a radical departure, but given Page's purposes it is, at best, a damaging oversight.

A cynic might accuse Page of merely culling the NFB/CBC collection to provide harassed teachers with rainy day lesson plans. In reality, this would be an injustice to Page, to **Seeing Ourselves**, and to those who will use the book intelligently as a tool for sophisticated programming. That said, one is still left with the impression that here, film is being used as illustration rather than provocation. Perhaps, contrary to the book's intentions, students should not be presented with films that are right on topic, prepared by a benevolent bureaucracy to meet their every need. Perhaps the job of relating a film to what is being studied is itself the lesson to be taught. And perhaps students should be presented with films that are somewhat less accessible, and slightly beyond their age group expectations. Certainly, more effort is needed to make all parties aware of the functioning of informational media, and its role in the formation of the Canadian reality.

Seth Feldman

Seth Feldman teaches film at the University of Western Ontario and, with Joyce Nelson, edited the Canadian Film Reader. He is currently president of the Film Studies Association of Canada.

Making Connections : The Behind The Scenes Story.

by Wade Rowland

Gage. Toronto. 1979. \$10.95.

On Sunday June 12, 1977, at nine-thirty in the evening, the CBC showed the first of two ninety-minute programs called *Connections* — an exploration of the nature and extent of organized crime in Canada. By the standards of the day, the programs represented a mammoth undertaking, involving three years of research and the expenditure of \$500,000. Through a carefully orchestrated campaign of selected leaks to pertinent columnists, the programs received bountiful advanced publicity, and were viewed by an audience in excess of anything the CBC had ever experienced. Some estimates ranged as high as 1.0 million viewers.

In writing *Connections*, Mr. Rowland takes the reader along the troubled, tortuous, and sometimes very dangerous path that ultimately led to international recognition for the producers and a re-evaluation of television journalism. What is crucial about these shows is that they attempted to weld investigative journalism and film technology to produce the immediacy and intensity of *cinéma vérité*. The interviews were painstakingly scouted, then shot under trying circumstances, usually from the back of surveillance vans that were frequently changed to avoid recognition. Detection could have meant a lost interview, wasted film, and the possibility of physical danger. Previously, television had concentrated on spot news and analysis, but *Connections* attempted to break out of those restrictions to provide a panorama of association and geography that spanned most of North America and

parts of Europe: the desire was to keep the welter of facts and faces alive and fresh for the audience. The crew's job was facilitated by the latest in technology: camera equipment perfected by the U.S. military in Vietnam, lenses capable of multiplying light eighty-thousand times, body pack recorders and concealed microphones. The crew members themselves demonstrated courage, and almost manic dedication to their goal that at times seemed impossible to achieve.

Rowland's interview-oriented account leaves little doubt that the project suffered from more than the usual number of personality clashes. Originally, the project stemmed from a collaboration between Jim Dubro and Bill Macadam, who were working on a series of proposals in hopes one might interest the CBC Current Affairs Division. Dubro was responsible for the research and Macadam for the packaging and presentation of the material through his production company, Norfolk Communications. One result of their collaboration was the program called *The Fifth Estate: The Espionage Establishment*. The lessons learned and the success encountered during that venture whetted Macadam's appetite for bigger game. Encouraged by Peter Herndorf, then newly appointed head of Current Affairs, who was anxious for properties that might stir the moribund department into life, the organized crime project was begun under a secret code name on December 9, 1974.

As the research progressed, several problems surfaced. First, there was reluctance on the part of the Canadian law enforcement agencies to admit that such a thing as organized crime existed. Second, it became evident that to get information from one source, it was necessary to provide information from another.



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Third, Canada's libel laws are particularly rigid, the legal department of the CBC was acutely sensitive to the possibility of law suits. The scope and complexity of the project seemed to warrant the introduction of a third party who would be able to assemble the all-important technical crew and handle the filming. The person selected was Martyn Burke; but the solution became one of the problems. As Rowland sees it, Burke operated on flashes of instinct and inspiration; he made his decisions quickly and wanted immediate results. The slower, more methodical Macadam cast wide nets that were often expensive, time-consuming and not always fruitful. From this basic difference in approach flowed a myriad of disputes, some petty, some grand, that often brought the filming to a screaming halt until cooler heads prevailed.

At least, principal filming was completed on May 17, 1976 and, after a rest and recuperation break of three months, Dubro, Macadam, and Burke returned to Toronto to do battle with the editing. And battle it was, as the threesome could not agree on a basic focus for what was becoming a surfeit of footage. The inexorably approaching deadline only inflamed the quarrels. When Herrndorf finally saw the best version that had been achieved, he was aghast at its length and shapelessness. To the rescue came Richard Nielson — later, of Nielson-Ferns — who was given the position of executive producer with the authority to make binding decisions. Fortunately, both Burke and Macadam respected his ability. Nielson's enthusiasm for the project — which had been rapidly eroding in the others — was a great asset. And finally, he proposed a structural solution to the problem: the project would consist of fourteen, separate, self-contained magazine items spread over two ninety-minute programs. Under his benevolent dictatorship the bickering diminished and the family settled down to work. At one point, before the screening of the show, Burke and Macadam were convinced that the CBC and more particularly Herrndorf, was going to shelve the film because of its volatile content. They set up a plan — never implemented — to steal the work print of *Connections* and safely hide it from bureaucratic mendacity. The CBC later denied any such intent.

The Rowland book raises some interesting questions about the ethicality of this type of program. Is there an irreconcilable, and potentially dangerous conflict of attitude and sensibility between the filmmaker and the journalist? Rowland feels that such a problem was inherent in the 'Biker Connection' sequence, where

the ugly sordidness of the gangs was obscured and softened by Martin Duckworth's lush photography. But then, Macadam was solely in charge of this section, and so, responsible for its look and content. As such he would not be the first director-producer to have become overly enchanted with his subject. If one accepts the premise that society is in a state of war with organized crime, then, does it follow that traditional mores are to be overlooked, as though the enemy were an external one?

Because art involves the manipulation of a material reality — in film, the manipulation of images — many consider the editor to be the only 'artist' in what is a very collaborative process. As more and more people rely on television as their primary source of information, the vital question arises as to who should make the final cut; and based upon what philosophy should those crucial cuts be made?

T.C. Maunder

Tom Maunder is General Manager of Cine Books in Toronto.

The Film Encyclopedia

by Ephraim Katz

New York, Thomas Y. Crowell; Toronto, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1979. \$39.95 hc.

Although motion picture history does not yet go back a century, related literature is already formidable. New York documentary filmmaker Ephraim Katz has just compiled what he and his publisher claim to be "the most comprehensive encyclopedia of world cinema in one volume." This feat not only reflects great self-confidence, but also a lot of time and energy spent on a collating job of monumental proportions.

In his preface, Katz is the first to admit that his claim to comprehensiveness is partially mitigated by certain practicalities. In order to make the book's format manageable, it was necessary to exclude some important material. Thus, there are no photographs, something of an anomaly in a book on visual arts; and there is no discussion of specific films, or film themes. This does limit the value of the encyclopedia, but Katz is justified in saying that to have included these aspects would have required a much greater selectivity and shortening of entries than he would have wished: the result, then, would have been

a work similar in form to Leslie Halliwell's **Filmgoer's Companion**, which suffers from its sacrifice of content for packaging.

The Film Encyclopedia concentrates on the biographical and technical aspects of cinema, and masterfully succeeds. Over 7000 entries are arranged alphabetically into 1,286 double-column pages. Included in the biographical entries are all the major actors, actresses, producers, writers, directors, cinematographers, art directors and editors of the American, British and "International" industries, as well as many lesser-known names. In the majority of cases, complete filmographies are given; and when they aren't, Katz notes that his listing is incomplete. There are essays on the history and development of movies in most countries, with the notable exception, for some reason, of Spain. Canada gets a full column; and if Katz' conclusion — that timidity and mediocrity are the most notable characteristics of our domestic feature industry — riles our newly-cocky producers, it confirms the views of many of our own critics.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the book, aside from the biographical, is the attention Katz devotes to technical terms. Such whimsical terms as "dinky-inky" (a small, low-voltage spotlight) are explained, as are other aspects of gaffer-speak. Trade and industry associations such as IATSE and the MPAA, are among the many other details explained on the actual process of filming, seldom described elsewhere.

Inevitably, in a work of this scope, there are omissions and errors. Some of these are due to faulty information in the sources Katz consulted; e.g., actress Jodie Foster is listed as having been born in New York in 1963, when in fact she was born in Los Angeles in 1962, according to most sources. Only John Willis' **Screen World** lists the 1963 date, and it seems odd that Katz would use it in view of the contradictions from other sources. It also seems odd that he would include entries on Terrence Malick, Paul Schrader and Claudia Weill, but not John Milius, Jonathan Demme and George Romero. However, these qualifications and others like them do not discount the value of Katz' work. **The Film Encyclopedia** is a reference book of value to all persons involved or interested in cinema, and the publication of Ephraim Katz' companion volume, dealing with film from a thematic point of view, is an event to look forward to.

Paul Costabile

*Paul Costabile is a Toronto librarian, collector of soundtracks and other movie memorabilia, and writes the **In Release** column for CineMag.*

FILM REVIEWS

Francis Mankiewicz's *Les bons débarras*

p.c. Les Productions Prisma Inc. p. Claude Godbout, Marcia Couëlle p.account. Louise Delauriers, p.sup. Monique Messier p.man. Francine Forest p.assist. Michelle St-Arnaud Jacques Garon André Brault p.sec. Andrée Lachapelle d. Francis Mankiewicz a.d. Lise Abastado, Alain Chartrand, Marie-Andrée Vinet (2nd a.d.) sc. Réjean Ducharme cont. Marie La Haye art.d. Michel Proulx d.o.p. Michel Brault cam. Guy Dufaux, Jean-Charles Tremblay assist.cam. Louis de Ernsted, Robert Martel, Michel Caron, Pierre Duceppe stunts Marcel Fournier, Yves Fournier, Serge Deniau sd. Henri Blondeau sd. Michel Descombes boom Marcel Fraser mus.dir. Bernard Buisson mus. arrange. Jean Corriveau, François Richard Bernard Buisson ed. André Corriveau ward Diane Paquet, Suzanne Harel make-up/hair Marie-Angèle Breitner-Protat props Pierre Fournier, Daniel Huysmans (assist.) elec. Jacques Paquet, Daniel Chrétien, Riches Francoeur, Eddy Trempe machine Serge Grenier, Robert Grenier still Yves Ste-Marie l.p. Charlotte Laurier, Marie Tifo, Germain Houde, Louise Marleau, Roger Lebel, Gilbert Sicotte, Serge Thériault, Jean-Pierre Bergeron, Léo Ilial, Madeleine Chartrand, Louise Rinfret, Eric Beauséjour, Jean-Pierre Duplessis, Marcella Fajardo, Marie Laurier, Henri. pub. Les Productions Prisma Inc. (1979) col. 35mm length 116 min. dist. Corporation des Films Mutuels Ltée. (Qué)

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a tale of passion and jealousy, twisted family ties, and an eternal, all-encompassing love. The novel's gothic wonderland provides a fantasy retreat for the little girl who dominates *Les bons débarras*, and its juxtaposition against the events and emotions in the film also cast it as a kind of literary chorus. There is something classically tragic about the movie, a profound sensation of individuals caught up in a situation they neither control nor completely understand. And in its passions, the film is structured on a very grand scale indeed.

Manon (Charlotte Laurier) lives with her mother Michelle (Marie Tifo), and uncle Ti-Guy (Germain Houde), outside a small town in rural Quebec. The family survives by chopping firewood and selling it to customers in the area, and their measly income is reflected in their living conditions. Michelle has accepted her lot without any hint of defeatism: alone, raising a daughter and tending for a somewhat retarded brother, she seems blessed with an unparalleled ability to cope. Discovering that she is pregnant by her policeman boyfriend, her reaction is one of muted joy, and she confides the



Silence speaks louder than words for Manon (Charlotte Laurier), and her mother Michelle (Marie Tifo).

news to her daughter in an effort to draw her closer.

It has the opposite effect. Manon is fiercely possessive of her mother, desperate to prove herself capable of providing for Michelle in every possible way. "I'm going to take care of you," she tells her during a strained telephone conversation. "I'm going to steal you and keep you in my heart." The girl offers herself as child/lover/protector with an intensity that confounds her mother. With extraordinary skill, Manon eventually succeeds in cutting Michelle's emotional bonds with the outside world, like a tiny schemer whose only wish is to be loved.

It is the marvel of the movie that one never doubts she already has that love. Manon is no deprived victim: Michelle skillfully distributes her affection among the people who crave it so badly. Director Francis Mankiewicz has drawn from his actors performances of amazing subtlety and terrific range; thus, there are no villains; the characters are victims of fate rather than one another. From the outset, Germain Houde's monosyllabic man/child seems to exist in some kind of beery twilight, and his response to the wealthy "Madame" whom they provide with firewood rouses him to an awareness he has never experienced before. But *Les bons débarras* has none of the romantic optimism of *The Beauty and the Beast*;

here, social standing and emotional handicaps are not transcended by love. He is ultimately destroyed by feelings he barely understands.

Marie Tifo demonstrates an extraordinary combination of strength and vulnerability, and her position as the love object of five people (including, in his fashion, Manon's pal Gaétan, the mechanic) forces her into a delicate balancing act. She never quite realizes just how badly Manon wishes to eliminate the other claimants to her affection, and the telephone conversation between mother and daughter after the revelation of the pregnancy is touched with a strange intensity.

It is the baby-Madonna face of Charlotte Laurier which dominates the film — her wide-eyed fragility belying a cool, almost adult capacity for reasoning. The genes have been passed on: Manon, like her mother, is a survivor. She wants what she wants, whether a fancy dog collar for her pet, some cheap makeup in a department store, or Michelle's undivided love: "What I can't earn," she warns at one point, "I'll steal." Laurier's shifts from childishness to precocity are flawlessly executed, and she has not a badly-timed moment in the film.

In league with director of photography Michel Brault, Mankiewicz has created images of a powerfully dark beauty, visions that meld with, rather than subordinate the lean, eloquent script. Arresting

FILM REVIEWS

close-ups of Manon's face against monotone backgrounds, the Pietà of Michelle cradling her half-clad brother as he dozes in a drunken slumber, and the images of the earth, the water, the colours of the leaves: this is an austere, evolved, visual language exercised with complete control. That sense of control, in fact, extends to every aspect of the film, its passions and its scope rendering it universally accessible. But there is another, equally profound reflection here. That sense of self that

Quebecers watching the film will experience is a very particular thing; that amazing right to say: "This is where I live, these are the people and the elements and the seasons that I live with," fills one with a heady kind of elation. It is an essential part of what motion pictures are all about, something rare enough in any part of the Canadian experience.

Barbara Samuels

Micheline Lanctôt's L'homme à tout faire

p.c. Corporation Image Ltee. (1979) p. René Malo exec.p. Jean-Claude Lord assoc.p. Ted Kotcheff s.d./sc./dial. Micheline Lanctôt a.d. Pierre Gendron 2nd. a.d. Michèle Mercure cont. Thérèse Bérubé p. assist. Francine Morin p.sec. Suzanne Comtois p. account. Bérangère (Catou) Maltais d.o.p. André Gagnon focus François Gill 1st assist. cam. Robert Guertin 2nd assist. cam. Daniel Vincelette ed. Annick de Bellefeuille, Diane Boucher (assist.) sd. Marcel Fraser boom Yvon Benoit sd. ed. Pierre Leroux, Jean-Pierre Cereghetti (assist.), Louis Dupire (assist.) m. François Lanctôt or. songs Gilles Vigneault mus. mix Louis Hone art.d. Normand Sarrazin art. assist. Daniel Champagne, Céline Mayrand props Pierre Fournier makeup Mickie Hamilton, Chantale Ethier hair Constant Natale cost. Henri Huet ward. Dominique L'Abbé p.sup. Jacques Normand, Jean Gauthier (assist) messenger Louis Gascon chief machinist Jean-Maurice de Ernsted machinist Denis Ménard chief electrician Claude Charron elect. Claude Brasseur stills Jean-Pierre Pelicano, Lise Labelle film titles Productions Ciné-Titres Enrg. op. eff. Les Films Transfocal Inc. l.p. Jocelyn Bérubé, Paul Dion, Andrée Pelletier, Gilles Renaud, Marcel Sabourin, Janette Bertrand, Danielle Schneider, Camille Bélanger, Roger Turcotte, Guy Thauvette, Louise Lambert, Martine Pratte, Pauline Lapointe, Martin Labrecque, Francis Labrecque, Madeleine Guérin, Louis Thompson, André Miron, Christiane Tessier, Véronique Vilbert, Denis Yukon Ménard col. 35mm run. time 99 min. pub. Thérèse David Publicité distrib. Les Films René Malo Inc.

Micheline Lanctôt, who began her film career as an animator and turned to acting (*La vraie nature de Bernadette*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and, more recently, *Blood and Guts*) has written and directed a feature film.

L'homme à tout faire (The Handyman) is not a movie that takes critics and audiences by storm, but it is the kind of satisfying film fare that makes you want to see another film by Micheline Lanctôt.

When she was acting, Lanctôt had a natural buoyancy about her. (No director could contain it, though in at least one

film, *Ti-cul tougas*, it alone was not enough to sustain faltering comedy.) *L'homme à tout faire*, also has that quality of buoyant wit, but here it is more than a glimmer of personality. Lanctôt is, we discover, a well-nurtured writer and director of comedy.

The film is a simple retelling of the tale of a hopeful country boy's journey to the metropolis. A difficult subject because it has already been done (in Canadian film, *Goin' Down the Road* is considered a classic), Lanctôt is never self-conscious about that. In fact, the film succeeds at several points in distilling its small truths into that jolting first shot.

Armand Dorion (Jocelyn Bérubé) is the type of man condemned to unhappiness as long as he is without a woman. When his wife and kids, by her former marriage, leave the unemployed carpenter, he decides to move to the city to look for

work and another lover. In Montreal he falls for the first woman whose eye lingers over his country garb — a young girl who is ultimately uninterested in Armand's design of the way things should be. His next find is older and married: Thérèse (Andrée Pelletier) hires him to finish the basement of her suburban home. After what seems an interminable period of stepping around and over each other, they realize they are in love.

A comedy of manners in the vein of *Cousin Cousine*, Lanctôt's film is not as refined or enlivened with foibles as the former, which became a North American hit. *L'homme à tout faire* won't go that far, though it is a pleasant relief from the befuddled comedy of cynicism that has so firmly rooted itself in our contemporary culture.

Lanctôt has said the film is about marginals, but it isn't really. For all their disappointments, her characters haven't dropped out of Quebec society and don't intend to. Thérèse is mainstream middle class. She falters, but she only really wants to get back to her husband through the hapless Armand. We suspect this during the scene when Thérèse's mother, played with much good grace and fun by Québec's "star" TV writer Janette Bertrand, discovers that her daughter is having an affair with the carpenter. There is a lengthy moment of silence before she breaks into peeling laughter, soon joined by her daughter. Armand, meanwhile, is



Their eyes tell it all, as Manon (Danielle Schneider) puts the make on a receptive Armand (Jocelyn Bérubé) in *L'homme à tout faire*

still in the bathroom trying to act employed and salve his dignity.

Jocelyn Bérubé plays the soulful Armand with real sensitivity and restraint. This is the kind of role which leaves audiences feeling that acting is not really work, and at the same time, as if they've just been through a psychological sauna. Bérubé is great — in spite of the inconsistent script. There is a shot of Armand and Thérèse coming out of a restaurant on the evening they are finally going to have together, that locks the image of poignant incongruity forever in one's mind.

Andrée Pelletier is not yet wholly at ease before the camera. There are times when her brightness seems false. In her sobered moments though, her voice and bearing have just the right cowed uncertainty about them. (She isn't helped by the confusing shift of focus in the middle of the film; the Dorion character is almost lost while we follow the frustrated suburban housewife through her paces.) Pel-

letier brings a certain classiness to the screen, and this may prove an important role for her.

There are other fine performances, by Marcel Sabourin and Gilles Renaud. For the most part though, Lanctôt's secondary characters are disappointingly one-faced.

While the music (by François Lanctôt) is often predictably emphatic, thus obtrusive, the film affords two striking musical moments. The first, when Armand, at the height of his passionate courting, leaves Thérèse alone in the kitchen while he plays her a violin serenade from behind the bedroom door. We are so conditioned into equating docility with weakness that we forget it can be heroic. And Gilles Vigneault's closing ballad ("All roads lead to the city...") is a winning movie theme song, in any language.

Joan Irving

Margaret Laurence, First Lady of Manawaka

p.c. National Film Board 1978 exec.p. Roman Droiter p. William Weintraub d./sc. Robert Duncan art.d./research Ronald Blumer d.ph. Barry Perles cam.assist. Andy Kitzenuck sd. Michel Hazel, Bernard Bordeleau re.rec. Jean-Pierre Joutel mus.ed. Don Douglas ed. Sidonie Kerr elec. Don Caufield unit admin. Tamara Lynch col. 16mm running time 52 min. 52 sec. distrib. National Film Board.

"Art, in fact, is never life."
- Margaret Laurence

To my mind, a particularly challenging form of documentary is the film which attempts to explore the life and literary work of an eminent writer. The special challenge that arises from this endeavor stems from the subtle interrelationship between the 'events' in imaginative fiction and the events in an author's life. No matter how close an author's real life experiences are to his or her literary creations, it can be argued that, ultimately, the literature transcends those objective correlatives, to achieve its own life and symbolic meaning beyond the confines of biography. According to this view, the whole of the literary work is more than the sum of the author's life.

Thus, the documentarist who would

explore the life and work of an author must walk a fine line, balancing the tensions between two realities — imaginative and biographical. Two recent films which, in my opinion, have achieved this difficult and delicate balance are David Kaufman's *A.M. Klein: The Poet As Landscape* and Donald Brittain's *Volcano: An Inquiry into the Life and Death of Malcolm Lowry*. Because filmmaker Robert Duncan was producer for the latter work, I anticipated that his directing of *Margaret Laurence, First Lady of Manawaka* would merit a similar distinction.

Duncan is a Scots-Canadian who came to Canada in 1967. He worked as a journalist for the *Montreal Gazette* until 1968, when he began writing for CBC productions. In 1974, he began his liaison

with the NFB — writing for, producing, and directing several projects, including the Lowry film and the delightfully penetrating profile of ad-man Jerry Goodis, entitled *Have I Ever Lied to You Before?* for which Duncan served as writer.

"*First Lady of Manawaka* was made," says Duncan, "to help readers, students and admirers understand Laurence's background and its relationship to her works." Interviews with her childhood acquaintances — including a teacher, a neighbour, a piano instructor — recollections from Laurence herself, and information provided by a voice-over narrator, convey to the audience a sense of Laurence's early life: the loss of her parents, the influence of the United Church, the importance to her of ancestry, her inner compulsion to write — which had already emerged by the primary grades. Laurence speaks of her sense of isolation until high school, when she found that she could write for the school paper. The excitement of this discovery made her feel that "maybe I actually have some talent that is socially acceptable." We learn of the impact on her life of the Second World War, then university, work, marriage, travel, children, divorce. The film makes use of still photographs, old film footage of soldiers returning, newspaper clippings to create a feel for the past.

By intercutting anecdotal recollections with readings from the novels, the film interweaves the biographical with the literary. But in doing so, it suggests a simplistic cause-effect relationship, as though we must find our way through her literature mainly by knowing her life. This is perhaps most evident and irritating in the decision to show us tracking-shots of modern-day Neepawa, Laurence's hometown, while we hear on the sound-track actress Jayne Eastwood reading passages

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A refreshing portrait of Margaret Laurence helps demystify the writing process

which depict Manawaka — the fictional community of the novels. In other places, the film attempts, far too literally, to dramatize passages from the novels; for example, it opens with the passage from *The Diviners*, in which Piper Gunn plays the pipes over Christie Logan's grave — an unforgettable and key moment in the novel:

"He swings the pipes up, and there is the low mutter of the drones. Then he begins, pacing the hillside as he plays. And Morag sees, with the strength of conviction, that this is Christie's true burial.

And Piper Gunn, he was a great tall man, with the voice of drums and the heart of a child, and the gall of a thousand, and the strength of conviction.

The piper plays 'The Flowers of

the Forest,' the long-ago pibroch, the lament for the dead, over Christie Logan's grave. And only now is Morag released into her mourning."

On screen, this reading is accompanied by longshots of the Neepawa graveyard where a piper is pacing among the tombstones. It is an affective, moody moment until the film cuts to close-ups of the piper's face — rendering too concretely a figure which would have been better left to our imaginations, and the power of the prose passage itself. But in other places, the filmmakers' urge to visualize the prose so literally works better. The Manawakans of *The Diviners* call the dump "the nuisance grounds," and a passage depicting the novel's setting is effectively underscored by long-shots of burning mounds of garbage, a smoldering wasteland which heightens our attention

and understanding of the nuances in the prose.

Several of the interview sequences with Laurence deal with the craft of writing in such a way that they would certainly seem to encourage any young 'scribblers' in the audience. There is a sense of demystification of the writing process running through this film, a sense — or more likely, a stance — which nicely goes against the popular grain of the 'alienated artist' working in isolation. Surprisingly, though, the filmmakers do not show us Laurence's workspace in her home, nor do we get a sense of her writing as being a daily, integral part of her life. The formal, respectful qualities of the interviews perhaps heighten our awareness of what Laurence calls her need for "an essential privacy."

The film may have been intended, and will probably be used, as a kind of introduction to Margaret Laurence and her works. Ironically, however, it seems that the film works better for an audience which is already thoroughly familiar with her work, especially considering the recurrent imagery and symbolism which prevades it. None of the various people interviewed ever discuss her work as a body of literature replete with its own inner structure, correspondences, imagery, recurring figures, etc. The voice of the literary critic is not heard in the film. And yet, parts of the film rely on just this level of understanding: the recurring tracking-shots along lush greenery, the use of an old CBC black-and-white interview with Laurence which, because of its placement in the film, is so like her own technique of "memory-bank movies." The film's final shot especially relies on this level of literary familiarity, and without it, seems awkward and unmotivated. Laurence walks to the pier below her house and turns to face the camera, looking up at us, with the water shimmering behind her. Her expression is hard to read — a mixture of vulnerability and strength. The film ends with a freeze-frame of her face, with the water behind it. It seems an unusual ending, unless one realizes the significance of water symbolism in her work, used as both a restoring, cleansing element and a destructive force which drowns and overwhelms.

Margaret Laurence: First Lady of Manawaka has already had several public screenings across the country and was shown on CBC in late-February. The film won the Gold Plaque for documentaries at the Chicago Film Festival of 1979.

Joyce Nelson

Taking Chances

p.c. Mobius Productions p./research Marilyn A. Belec d. Robert Lang sc. scenes Robert Lang, David McIlwraith set design Christophe Bonniere d. ph. Victor Sarin light. Ian Challis still ph. Douglas Webb sd. Steve Joles re-rec. Joe Grimaldi mus. Andrew Thompson ed. Stephen Best l.p. Kathryn Aitken, Leigh Sarty, John Loughheed, Anne Marie-Stephenson, Shirley Wheatley col. 16 mm length 22 min. year 1979 dist. Marilyn A. Belec

Taking Chances is a twenty-two minute docu-drama dealing with teenage sex and pregnancy. The film is divided between the enactments of various situations which occur in the relationship of two teenagers, Leigh and Kathy, and scenes from a discussion group in which several other young people offer their views on the issue.

Leigh and Kathy try to cope with the emotional and practical conflicts and commitments that are part and parcel of bringing sex into a serious relationship. Kathy confides in a friend her worry about pregnancy and her inability to communicate this sense of urgency to Leigh. Leigh tries to convince Kathy that there is nothing to worry about. Kathy and her friend go to a clinic for advice on the different methods of contraception. Leigh and his friend go to the drug store to buy condoms, but lose their nerve and leave with a bag of potatoe chips instead. Kathy gives Leigh an ultimatum. Leigh forces himself to become more responsible, more communicative — and ultimately, more loving.

It sounds a little like *As the World Turns*, but still, the film clearly emphasizes the points that are most crucial. The comments from the discussion group range from one girl's declaration that she does not want anything "unnatural inside me" when she has sex, to one boy's realization that "It's a pleasure, but it's also an added responsibility."

Interestingly, Leigh is depicted as the irresponsible one in the enactment, but in the rap session it is the boys who come across as the more articulate and mature. Still, it would have been a major step if the film had provided a few clues — apart from the obvious one, that it is not *their* bodies which have to deal with the consequences of carelessness — as to *why* boys are traditionally considered the irresponsible ones.

Taking Chances does not provide answers on a psychological level, but it does provoke questions. To anyone with an open mind the film makes the issue



Sex is the subject of this serious tête-à-tête between Ann Marie Stephenson and Kathryn Aitken in **Taking Chances**.

accessible. The screening at the Science Centre was attended by the producer, Marilyn Belec, and a panel of professionals in the field of behaviour. Afterwards, there was a powerful catalyst for dialogue, on a topic that needs to generate as much talk and understanding as possible.

The perspectives and opinions offered ran the gamut. Concerning the film's content the two most telling comments were about values. An eleven-year-old asked plaintively, "Can anybody here tell me what I should do with my life?" There were wry chuckles all over the auditorium, but a concerned mother was soon up and talking about the need for a strong moral structure in every adolescent's life.

The young people in the film are depicted as existing in a social vacuum, exploring in the dark, piecing together their world as they go along. The only allusion to family or parents is one of fear: "My parents would kill me if they found out." The only adult presented in the film is the counsellor at the birth control centre. But her advice, as it should be, is practical, and not weighted down by tones of judgement, or a specific moral outlook.

Parents screening the film will probably be left confused or dismayed by the large generation gap, and the chaotic whirl of messages and directions that lie between. Young people requiring definite precepts

of what is right and wrong won't find answers either. In this regard, **Taking Chances** does just that — by leaving adolescents on their own to figure out their own values in a modern world. This may, in fact, be a realistic stance, considering that teenagers demand time and space to work things out by themselves anyway.

In sum, the film is optimistic and topical enough to remain relevant for a long time.

John Brooke

Letter to Vietnam

p./d./sc. Eugene Buia m. Joan Baez (Heaven Help Us All) sd./ed. Joe Solway lp. Garry Sun Hoan col. 16mm running time 47 min.

Eugene Buia's **Letter to Vietnam** is precisely what its title implies.

The film is an open letter — albeit using the medium of film, instead of paper and an envelope — from nine-year-old Garry Sun Hoan, a refugee from Vietnam now living in Canada, to his parents who are still in Vietnam.

The young letter-writer, a Chinese national, fled Vietnam two years ago in a small fishing boat. He subsequently found himself on a Hong Kong-based



photo: Trikat Media Prod.

Vietnamese refugee Garry Sun Hoan with director Eugene Buia and his son — putting on a brave face in a new world.

freighter which took him to a Malaysian refugee camp. From there he came to Canada.

It would have been impossible for Garry to actually send an ordinary letter to his parents. He did not, after all, know his parents' whereabouts back in Vietnam. In fact, at the time the film was made, he did not even know whether or not his parents were alive.

For those of us who have never experienced refugee status, the plight of those from Vietnam — or any other war zone — is exceedingly difficult to comprehend. Yet, in *Letter to Vietnam*, director Eugene Buia — who is himself a political refugee, a native of Romania, where he gained extensive experience as a director and producer of feature films — manages to communicate, forcefully and clearly, the enormity of the refugee's struggle.

Buia achieves this through a voice-over narration of Garry's comments to his parents on life in Canada, newsreel and documentary footage from Vietnam, and silent footage of Garry exploring his new Canadian environment.

Buia's 'letter' format encourages viewers to make that leap in imagination of placing themselves in Garry Sun Hoan's position: of witnessing a Santa Claus parade for the first time, of visiting a typical Canadian supermarket, of en-

countering a newborn Vietnamese baby in the alien setting of a Canadian hospital, of sitting in a Canadian classroom, of reminiscing about a childhood spent in the streets of Saigon.

Technically, the film's stock newsreel footage, and the Toronto sequences, both exhibit, at times, a somewhat disorienting camera jitter and a very frequent use of the zoom lens, which some viewers may find disconcerting. On the other hand, for many, the powerful content of *Letter to Vietnam*, and the confident, burgeoning quality of the editing (many of the newsreel sequences are repeated several times, to good effect, will make up for any of the film's minor, technical shortcomings.

Jaan Pill

Star Ways

p.c. Mekanique Productions (1979) p./d. Larry Moore p. asst. Ontario Arts Council cam. op. Fred Guthe, Nicholas Kendall cam. asst. Janek Croydon, Stewart Miller, Keet Neville ed. Bruce Annis m.comp./pref. David Grimes spec. effects/rigs Janek Croydon, Mark MacCammon l.p. Robin Hayle, Marc Kyriacou, Mr. Bink, Andrew Kilgour col. 16mm run. time 5 min. dist. Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

In Larry Moore's first film, a young boy with his *Star Wars* comic book runs to the front window of a subway train and pretends to pilot a spaceship out of the station and into the black of space. The lights of the tunnel zip by, transformed into red, green, and yellow galaxies, as the boy hits the controls like a pinball machine. Abruptly, Darth Vader looms up and the boy fires at him. When the boy steps out of the ship, Vader chases and catches the boy on the platform — and turns into his mother.

It's a five-minute miniature with a \$700 million set built by the Toronto Transit Commission. Moore co-opts the architects' 'modern' effect for his film, and does so successfully; since, for most of us, a house may be fact, but a subway is still science-fiction-becoming-fact.

With similar economy, Moore creates galaxies using another fiction already established by others in the big league — notably by Trumbull and the million-dollar special effects people of cinema-sci-fi. Abstract filmmakers diddled colors and patterns with sound, but were long out-of-work, until movies like *2001* created jobs. Deep space is mysterious, and so are abstract films: ergo, spaceships in deep space travel through colors and patterns with sound. It's a fine convention, and for the first little while, *Star Ways* creates the right, headlong rush with its simple running lights.

But the convention is well enough established that viewers are wanting something more to happen, while Moore himself is still just speeding along.

In a small and precious miniature, there's precious little room for confusion. The mother who switches places with Vader at the end is the same woman seen in an opening shot, where she appears to be waiting to the board the same train at the same time. So the audience faces some logical discomfort when Vader/mother appears on the platform ahead of the boy as he enters the last station. The problem is small, but so is the film, and the interference it causes seems large.

On the platform, the boy runs as though the fantasy has become too solid, and one momentarily remembers the rush and flash of a kid's mind and the strength of its healthy psychosis. When, after all, the boy recognizes his mother, Moore is alert enough to show us the warmth between them, so we won't go home wondering what villainy the woman actually represented.

As the boy runs from Vader, the camera swings in line with the accelerating train.

The match of both motions seems to fling the actor forward by the craft and timing of his maker. It's an exciting moment that promises more to come.

A first film must be a shout across a canyon, so wide and deep are those first technical and logistical problems. Wisely, Moore has kept his shout simple.

David Sharpe

For Elizabeth

p.c. York University and Richard Zywockiewicz (1979) d./sc. Richard Zywockiewicz p.man. Aaron Lo ph. Robin Campbell light. Tony Sloan sd. Richard Irvine sd. ed. Richard Zywockiewicz ed. Clint Young l.p. Maureen Brown, George Belsky, Ron Wolosyn, Ron Hughes acknowl. Theatre Ontario (STEP), Ontario Multicultural Theatre col. 16mm run. time 22 min. dist. Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

Good intentions don't count for much in art. However well-meaning and earnest the filmmaker, the final product may be just plain bad: **For Elizabeth**, a 1979, York University, student production, written and directed by Richard Zywockiewicz, is a case in point. Despite the feeling and commitment behind this film, the end result is still corny and pretentious.

Zywockiewicz described it as "the haunting story of an immigrant widower and his daughter, in a sensitive portrayal of two lonely people, isolated, longing for the past when the family was whole. Although ambiguous and impressionistic, the film explores the breakdown of family relationships within a threatening society."

Sympathy is a tiresome justification for interest in a film character; but it is the only one in this film — and it doesn't work. Elizabeth and her father are presented only as victims, so the drama comes too easily, and is inauthentic.

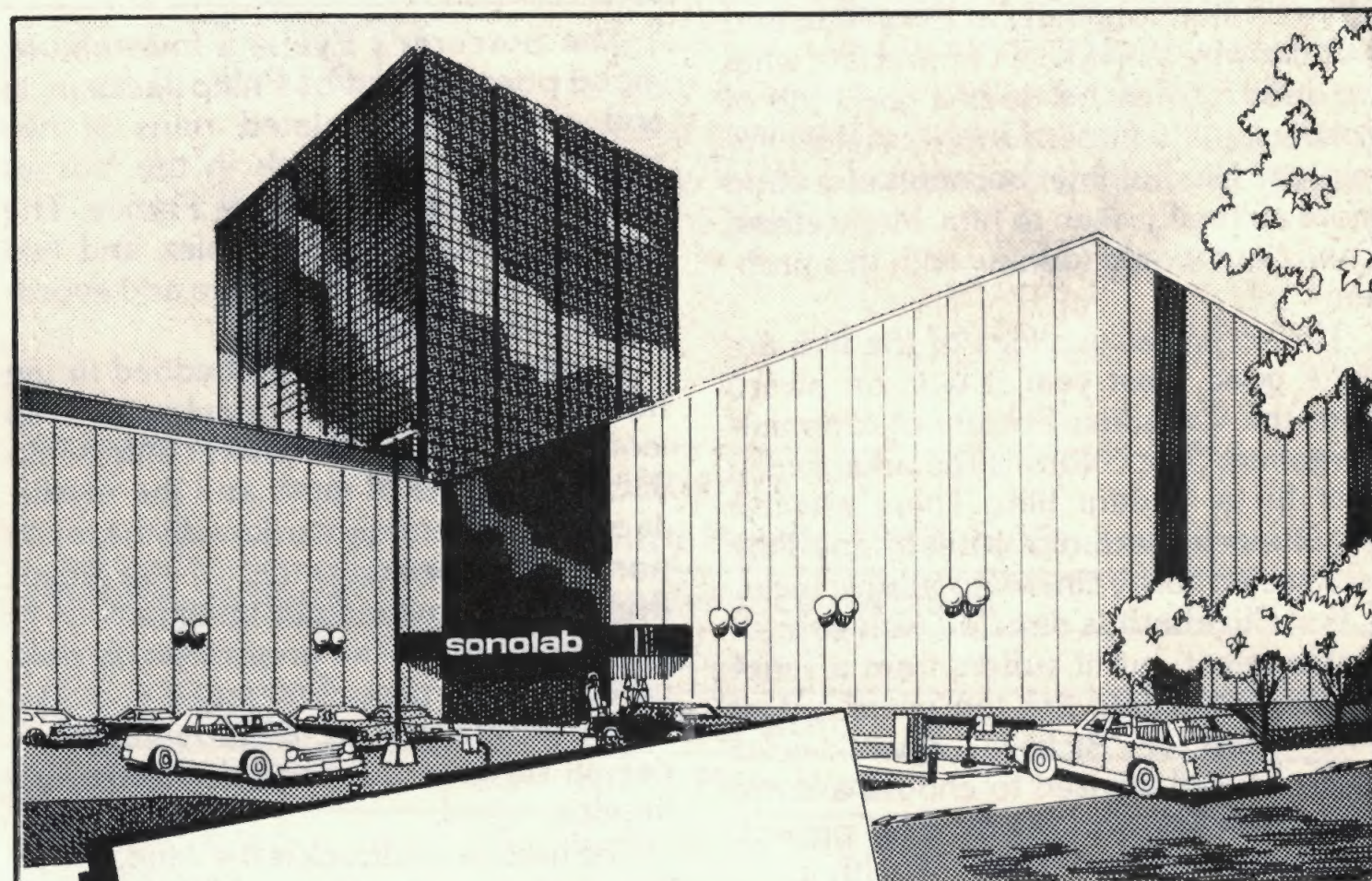
Elizabeth is shy, seemingly friendless, and treated as a sex object by inconsiderate males. Even the 'nice' boy she meets suddenly abandons her to go overseas. Her adolescent, or post-adolescent pangs, are real enough, but they are certainly not tragic; hence, they should have been treated in this film (if at all) with much understatement.

The dialogue is less at fault than are the situations. Elizabeth is shown running wildly along a frozen beach. She falls, and lies there until a young man (Prince

Charming?) comes to her aid. After an argument with her father, she falls asleep in her room, and is awakened by a ringing phone, probably her new male friend. Instead of answering it, Elizabeth stands in front of the mirror and combs her hair. Not only is the scene unrealistic, but one

later concludes that it is a script device, used so that the girl might receive bad news in person instead of over the telephone.

Since there is no evidence to suggest that Elizabeth is actually mentally disturbed in a clinical sense, her catatonic-



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like states only prompt the viewer to think that she should stop feeling sorry for herself. Maureen Brown was chosen Best Actress at the 1979 Canadian Student Film Festival for this role, but the character does little more than mope, and the acting is unsubtle.

George Belsky, as the father, deserves more attention. Though he is only called upon to look longingly at Elizabeth, and wonder why she doesn't appreciate what he does for her, he does a good job of portraying a confused and nostalgic immigrant. His daughter becomes more and more culturally alien to him. Many ethnic Canadians would identify with this problem.

The technical qualities of the film are quite good. Last year it won an award from the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. The colour is remarkably distinct for a student film. There are few gratuitous camera movements, and little reliance on flashy cinematographic tricks.

For Elizabeth is directed with considerable talent, but it suffers from a script whose sentiments are ten years out of date. Director Richard Zywockiewicz might be well advised to choose a script other than his own for his next project. He'd probably do a good job with it.

Gerry Flahive

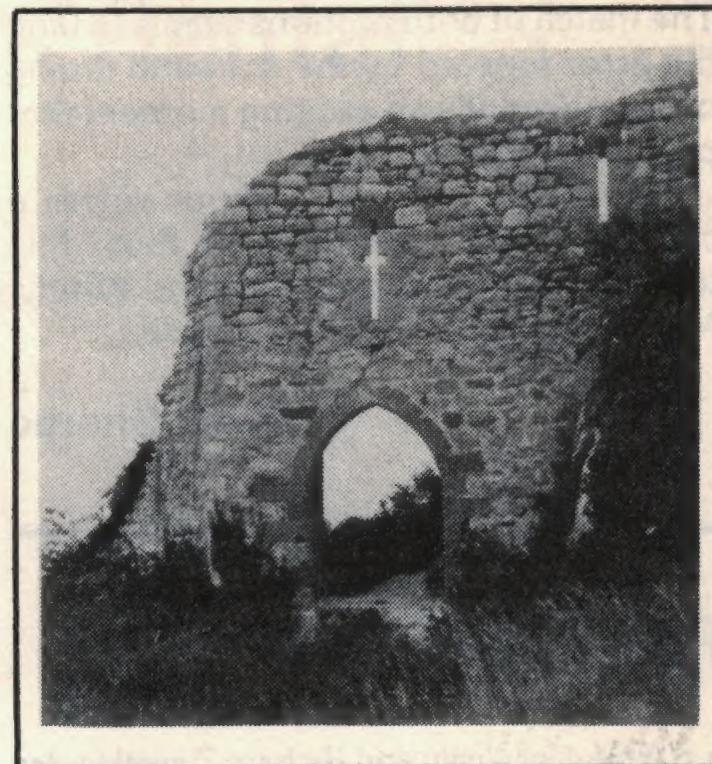
The Sorcerer's Eye

p.c. Lightscape Films (1979) p./d./ph. G. Phillip Jackson sd. FX from Soundmix Ltd. sd. mix. Patrick Spence-Thomas ed. Philip Jackson, Kenneth Gordon (asst.) lab. Northern col. 16mm running time 4 min. distrib. Light scape Films.

The Sorcerer's Eye is a four-minute, mood poem, filmed by Philip Jackson, in and around the isolated ruins of two medieval fortresses high in the Yosges Mountains in north-eastern France. The piece, produced with a Bolex and two primary lenses, is an effective and evocative exercise in simplicity.

A huge stone circle, embedded in the hillside on its edge, is the focal point — an icon through which the viewer enters into Jackson's sense of myth and the mystic. Jackson deliberately works with the many portals and passageways of the abandoned ruins, inviting our imaginations to go beyond the bleak grey stone. A staggered editing pace, low-angle views of lonely towers, and a cold mountain sunrise all serve to call forth the Sorcerer's timeless world.

The basic soundtrack is the wind, whistling and moaning through the ghostly archways. It is quietly augmented by



electronics, and, as we are transported, by the echoes of a Celtic harp.

The film seeks to establish and explore a specific mood — no more and no less. And this it does. A poem: it's good to see that some people still believe in them for their own sake.

John Brooke

ERRATUM

Apologies to **Atlantic City, USA** for our error in issue no. 63, p. 5. In listing the credits for the film, the following were omitted: **assist. d. in prep.** John Desormeaux **cont.** France Lachapelle **d.o.p.** Richard Ciupka **csc assist. cam.** Andy Chumura, Larry Lynn **cam. apprentices** Paul Morin (Can.) Michel Guay (USA).

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Elizabeth's father (George Belsky) — culturally confused, alienated, and longing for the past.

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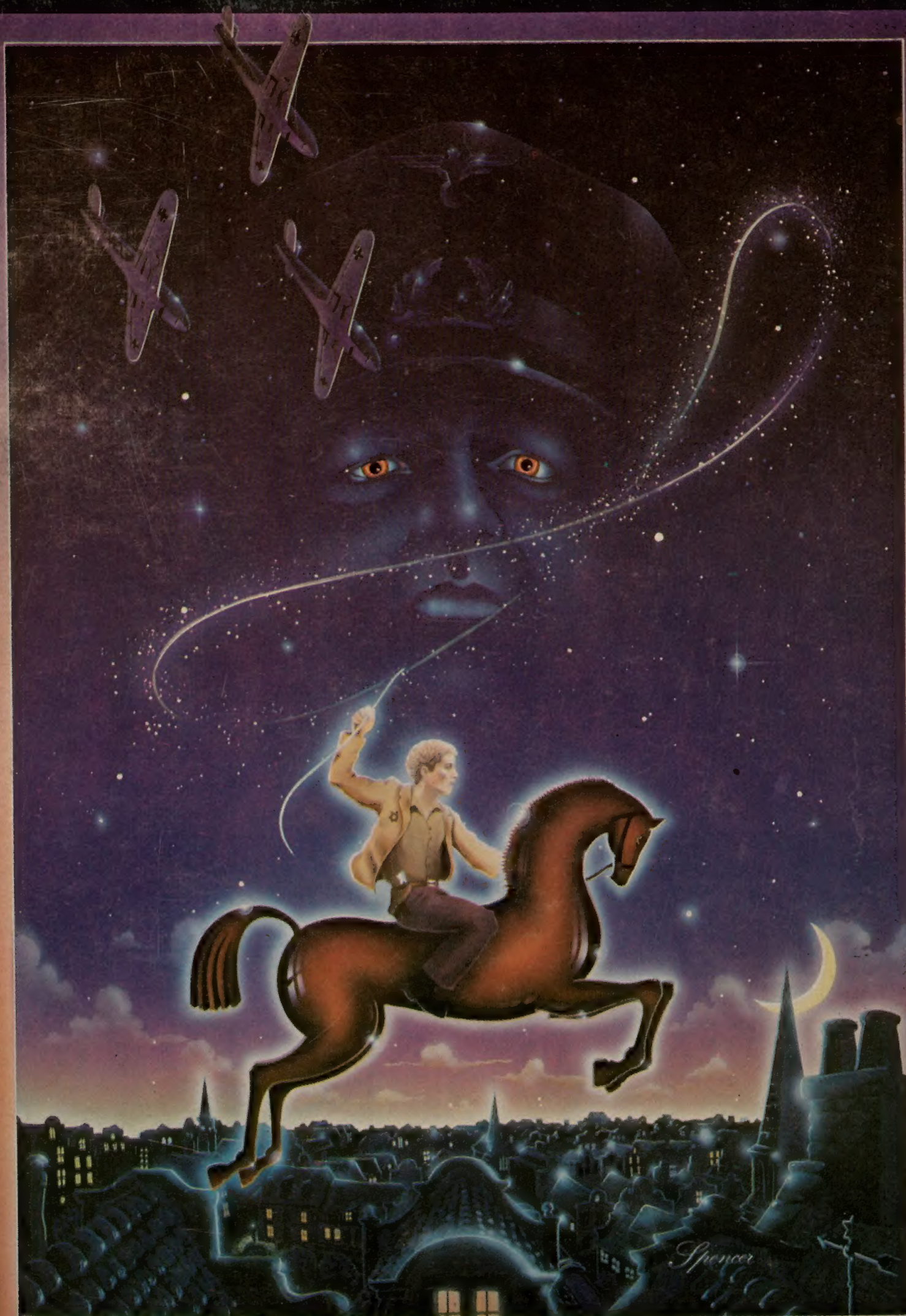
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